

PHYSICAL EDUCATION:  
THE CONCEPT AND ITS JUSTIFICATION

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## ABSTRACT

In part one, chapter one, the meaning of education is looked at. It is argued that 'education' is an essentially contestable concept and that philosophers of education can only hope to define it themselves by putting forward their own contestable definitions. I then define the concept as: learning which promotes the development of the person qua person, but I recognise that this is contestable. With the ultimate aim of being able to defend this definition, chapter two is devoted to examining the concept of learning and chapters three to six to the concept of the person. More specifically with reference to the latter, in chapter three, a short exposition is given of how what it is to be a person has been explained in the past, in chapter four, that it is essentially characteristic of the person that he is a centre of human experience, and in chapters five and six, respectively, that he is also a rational and moral agent. In part two, chapter seven, the concept of development is analysed and, in chapter eight, the definition of education given above is explained and defended against other definitions.

In part three, the concept of physical education is examined and justified. In the first two chapters the subject matter is defined. Chapter nine being concerned with the concept of sport and the value of physical skill and chapter ten with physical education, dance and aesthetic values. Then, in chapter eleven physical education is justified in that it can legitimately be said to fulfil two roles. Namely, it gives a conceptual group of activities a name and at the same time it correctly asserts these activities are of educational value. By taking a formalist theory usually to be found in the philosophy of art and by applying it to P.E. activities, physical education can be seen to have a coherent rationale and recognisable 'K' values which are unique and which are appreciated disinterestedly by the participant; and, by taking the definition of education which has already been put forward and defended in parts one and two, physical education is justified because of the considerable contribution it makes to the development of the person qua person.

Firstly, as a centre of experience a person can gain intrinsic satisfaction: generally through experiencing the interplay of different powers; and more specifically through learning to move skilfully and in some activities

aesthetically as well. Secondly, as an evaluator, a person, by learning to perform in sport and dance, will have the range of intrinsically worthwhile activities open to him increased. Thirdly, but incidentally, physical education may, to a limited extent, make a contribution to the development of the person as a moral agent. Fourthly, and also incidentally, engagement in many P.E. activities is likely to make a person physically fit and could therefore help in an indirect way towards the development of the person and the subsequent quality of his life. Finally, however, it is concluded that it is only because there are values in physical education which are not to be found anywhere else, namely unique 'K' qualities, and the appreciation of which requires initiation as a participant into different physical activities, that the educational value of P.E. activities can be most strongly justified and the subsequent place of physical education on the school curriculum.



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PART ONE:

EDUCATION AND THE CONCEPT OF THE PERSON:



## CHAPTER ONE: THE MEANING OF EDUCATION

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## CHAPTER ONE : THE MEANING OF EDUCATION

### i INTRODUCTION

The meaning of education has been defined in a variety of highly contestable ways to the extent that there seems to be difficulty in laying down what might even be considered as the criteria that could serve to distinguish education from other things. Considering philosophy of education has been on the map now for a good number of years, the student teacher could be forgiven, if, when looking to philosophy as a means of clarifying his ideas, formulating and justifying his educational values, he becomes somewhat dismayed in finding that philosophers who have been engaged in the activity for much longer than he has, or is ever likely to be, cannot even agree on what the term 'education' actually means. He could, indeed, come to the conclusion that if this in itself is a controversial area there will be little chance of him making sense of the rest of it, and at this point he may as well throw in the towel.

Now, one of the obvious causes of difficulty is due to the fact that the word 'education' is used in so many different ways, so that it could be argued there are really several distinct but related concepts which have the same verbal marker. For example, it can refer to any kind of human upbringing or process of socialization, which may, or may not, include reference to an educational system; it can also be used where there is no intentional process of formal initiation but where we refer to those experiences that are significant to us from just 'being in the world'. These kinds of definitions show that 'education' can be used in a very loose sense. But it can also be used in a very tight and precise way: for example, when education is contrasted to training or indoctrination, or when it is used to refer to those qualities which are constitutive of the educated man. Often, the distinction between the different uses is made clear because of the way the word 'education' is qualified. We talk, for example, of liberal education, primary education, physical education and remedial education.

However, while it may be somewhat unfortunate that there are so many



different uses of the one term all carrying the same label, there is no reason why this in itself should lead to endless disagreement. A point which is fully appreciated by J. Wilson in his article 'Concepts, Contestability and The Philosopher of Education' (1), where he says: 'It is nothing new that different people mean different things by the same word but what we should say here is that the word marks different concepts not that one and the same concept is being contested' (2).

In this same article Wilson criticises W.B. Gallie in his account of essentially contested concepts (3) for failing to distinguish between the use of words and the use of concepts and of trading on this ambiguity. He suggests that Gallie's account fails once this distinction is understood and acknowledged. In order to illustrate his point, Wilson gives the example of the word 'chat', which has a different meaning depending on whether you are French or English speaking. In so doing, he exposes one of the main weaknesses of his argument, for while there is no relationship between the different meanings in this, and other examples he gives (4), with the word 'education', while it may also refer to different concepts, they are rarely, if ever, unrelated ones. This means, providing we are sympathetic to Wittgenstein's use of a family analogy and are prepared to look for a 'family resemblance' when analysing concepts, we may have good grounds for talking generally about the concept of education in a collectively overlapping sense.

Of course, for this to be the case we would have to show that different uses of the term shared at least some of the same underlying criteria. Certainly where this did not occur the differences between them would then be sufficiently fundamental for us to say here are totally different concepts which just happen to have been given the same verbal marker. For example, sometimes what is in effect a training programme is given the label 'education' but analysis of the concept of training shows not only that it is a quite different concept, but that the criteria which define it can actually be contrasted to those of education in order to make the meaning of the latter clearer (5).

But where the uses of the term do share the same basic criteria, even though they differ in others, surely we are justified in talking about the concept of education which would encompass different individual meanings



of the term, that is providing there are a sufficient number of common criteria that are basic to any one meaning. And if these criteria are applied in different contexts and in so doing generate further criteria, then have we not also got grounds for talking about the use of the concept as well? The use of the concept, in effect to make new but related concepts?

However, even if a broad definition of the concept of education can be justified, and even if the notion of using a concept can be saved, this still leaves us with the more basic issue: why should the concept of education or different, but related concepts of education, however one prefers to put it, be contestable?

It is a question which Wilson raises in the article already referred to and to which he gives the answer that there is nothing to contest. He says:

'If controversy over meaning of concepts does exist, this is simply because we have not taken the trouble to analyse adequately, to observe and note differences and similarities between the different uses of the one term'. (6)

All that is needed, therefore, for the bewildered student teacher wishing to understand the concept and concepts of education better is to become skilful in the technique of careful descriptive analysis, and to learn to apply them to anything labelled 'education'.

But even if the task could be described as simply as that we would still need to acknowledge that the validity of such a task must rest on our prior understanding of a theory of meaning. Analysing a concept like education is dependent on us knowing the rules that govern the use of the term but this rests on the question of how the general nature of those rules is to be explained. In contemporary philosophy two main explanations could be given, namely one supplied by communication-intention theory and the other by formal semantic theory. The former is concerned with what is done when an utterance is made, the latter with the utterance itself. H. Grice, for example, as one of the best known exponents of communication-intention theory would analyse 'meaning that X' as: 'A must intend to induce by X a belief in an audience and he must also intend his utterance to be recognised as so intended' (7).



While, in contrast, D. Davidson gives a recursive explanation (8). He argues that in looking for a theory of meaning we are looking for a theory of truth which would conform to Tarski's Convention T: where X is true if and only if P by substituting the structural description of S for X and our English translation of S for p. (9) On this analysis of meaning the function that language has of communication is inessential.

In giving a semantic analysis of meaning the idea of truth remains entirely formal. It is for this reason that many have found the theory as a complete theory of meaning to be inadequate. For example, Strawson says to define truth only recursively amounts to a refusal to face the general philosophical question altogether. He argues:

'Having agreed to the general point that the meanings of the sentence of a language are determined or largely determined by rules which determine truth conditions, we then raise the general question what sort of thing truth conditions are, or what truth conditions are conditions of and we are told that the concept of truth for a given language is defined (my italics) by the rules which determine the truth conditions for sentences of that language.

Evidently we cannot be satisfied with this' (10).

It is for this reason that in formulating a theory of meaning we cannot just rely on an extensionalist account, for we cannot deny the importance of communication - intention to our understanding of language and this is because it is only by recourse to such a notion that we can explain the idea of truth which is not simply a recursive one.

Speech - Act Theorists have recognised that language is natural and that it is only if it was artificial that Tarski's theory of truth would work (11). The nature of language can only be fully understood if we recognise its purpose and, that is, communication between persons who hold beliefs and act intentionally towards one another. It is only within this context that we can give an explanation of the meaning of a sentence where we need to know under what conditions one who utters it says something which is true. For we cannot explain in general what it is to say something true by giving only semantic criteria we have also to refer to the role of belief and the expression of belief (12).



Now in giving criteria of a particular concept in order to analyse its meaning are we giving truth conditions? Clearly we are not giving truth conditions in a semantic sense. In fact Scruton has argued that the concept of truth developed in semantics is something quite separate from the question of individual analysis and that 'it can be neither set aside, nor amended in the light of considerations that arise only in analysis of individual terms' (13). I would argue, however, in the Wittgensteinian sense that criteria are rules of language operating in different language games. Moreover, they are not just conventional rules for making unimportant classifications which have value only because they tell us when it is correct to say something; rather it is because they reflect 'shared beliefs', 'agreement in judgments' held because of our common purposes and because the world is as it is and as we have made it, that criteria governing the use of a term can be said to have truth value.

If we now return to the task of analysing the concept of education it becomes immediately relevant that we are not dealing with an empirical but an evaluative concept, so that if the criteria of the concept of education can be said to have truth value it is to the extent that they reflect agreement in judgments which are essentially evaluative ones. Indeed, it is because of its evaluative nature that it has been of so much interest to philosophers. For this interest, I would suggest, has not been due so much to the demand just for conceptual analysis, although obviously that existed, but because of the moral issues that analysis has brought to light, either because moral issues were actually found to be embedded in the meaning of education or because it was found to be impossible to analyse the concept without presupposing or making certain value judgments oneself.

Now Wilson's account does not do justice to this. By trying to restrict the kind of permitted usage of the term 'education' to a purely descriptive one, he denies the starting point of the whole enterprise: education as a morally evaluative concept.



## ii TWO USES OF 'EDUCATION'

The distinction between these two uses is well brought out by W.F. Frankena in his article, 'The Concept of Education Today' (14) where he defines the descriptive, sociological use as:

'the transmission to the young of the dispositions or states of mind that are regarded as desirable by their elders'

and the evaluative use as:

'the fostering in the young of the dispositions or states of mind that are desirable'

Both definitions Frankena suggests, can be generated from the same basic matrix or formula in which:

'X is fostering or seeking to foster Y in some disposition D by method M, and where there is an underlying assumption that the disposition is a desirable one that is worth fostering' (15)

Clearly both uses do exist, even if we were acting as sociologists and wished to analyse the education of a society in an externally descriptive way, there would still be those within that society who, because they were committed to it, would talk of the same education in an internal evaluative sense.

However, Wilson, I think, would have a reply to this, he would argue that, while the prescriptive use does indeed exist, it needs to be re-interpreted. He says, for example, that, 'when people who are not sociologists ask, "what is education?", they really mean, or ought to mean, "what should our education system consist of?". This would at least be the right way to put it' (16).

But as education clearly is used in an evaluative sense, that is people do write particular values into the actual meaning of education, Wilson is being stipulative in suggesting that we should keep the descriptive use, but rule the normative one out.



Now there are philosophers who would try to show that Wilson cannot do this on strictly logical grounds by arguing that the normative use is logically prior to the sociological one. T.F. Daveney, for example, argues that because both uses of education presuppose either an ideal person or ideal society for which the education fits the individual member, then, when we talk of education, in whatever sense, values are necessarily, that is, logically, implied (17). P. Walsh in an unpublished paper also argues in this way. He uses the analogy of project planning, in which language can be involved in two ways, one in conceiving and planning the project, the other in describing it as planned or executed. He then suggests the purely descriptive function of language has to be secondary to the planning use because, until the project is planned, there is nothing to describe. (18). The analogy is supposed to hold because education is the name of a human project.

However, it is difficult to see how those kinds of arguments can be sustained. Certainly, without dispositions regarded as desirable, or beliefs and attitudes thought worth passing on, or worthwhile activities that persons should be initiated into, education would not exist, but this does not mean that values, as a matter of logical necessity have to be written into the meaning of education. (Similarly, while without the planning of the project there will be nothing to describe and while the project will depend on, and reflect the values of the planners, there is still no reason why these have to be written into the meaning of the project.) Wilson is therefore quite at liberty to suggest that while it does happen - i.e. values are written into the meaning of education, there is no logical reason why they should and that it would be much better, at least philosophically speaking, if they did not.

One of the reasons why the kind of argument that Daveney gives seems to carry weight is because the term 'evaluative concept' can be understood in different ways. For example:

- (1) where the concept in question presupposes certain values or value judgments, but where these are not written into the concept and are not therefore logically implied (e.g. this is true with the concept of reform);
- (2) where certain values have become written into the meaning of the concept (for example this is often said of both democracy



and education) but where the concept is actually used in only an external descriptive sense (for example by sociologists);

(3) where certain values have become written into the concept and where it is being used because there is a commitment to those values, in other words, to use the concept is to justify and prescribe.

But only on the last two uses of what could be meant by an evaluative concept would it be true to say that the normative use was logically prior to the descriptive use. And while the use of education as a concept must always presuppose certain value judgments (for example, as Daveney suggests, to do with an ideal person or society) it does not have to be used in the last two senses, although as I shall argue later, these can be justified in other ways.

We could, however, criticise Wilson on the grounds of inconsistency as P. Snelders has done (19). For if Wilson believes in the importance of the non-evaluative descriptive analysis of concepts, then he can neither deny the normative use exists nor pass a death sentence in order to rule it out, and still uphold that concepts should be subject only to descriptive analytical treatment. But it may at least be wiser to waive this criticism and to allow the force of his argument to be considered, namely, that at least as philosophers, we need to consider matters of value in their own right as substantive issues separate from conceptual ones. Is Wilson's fear justified, then, that if the two are combined there will always be a danger that 'people will attempt to force or smuggle their preferred ideologies into certain categories under some disguise or other?' (20)

Presumably, Frankena would not think so, for in the article I have already referred to, having made the initial distinction between the two uses of education, he then goes on to recommend the adoption of the evaluative one, at least when we are engaged in educational activity and to leave the other for use in the social sciences. In other words, he proposes that we should accept by definition that education is essentially a normative concept (in the third sense given above). Frankena argues that if the meaning of education is restricted to the sociological sense, then it limits education by definition to 'the cultivation of dispositions already regarded by society as desirable by methods already



regarded as satisfactory' (21). In a similar way that it is always possible with regard to the moral code of a particular society to raise the overriding question of its moral justification according to criteria that are universal in their application and cannot be dismissed as socially relative, so with education, whatever dispositions, may as a matter of sociological fact be fostered by a particular society, we can still question their educational value and we can talk of educating society itself. It is only by recourse to the normative use, Frankena maintains, 'that we will have a concept of education that can guide us (my italics) as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night' (22).

However, in practical terms, the difference between these two may not be as great as it first appears. For there is no reason why Frankena should not agree with Wilson that private preference should not be sneaked in under the guise of definition, or why Wilson should disagree with Frankena that what actually does go on under the name of education should not be open to assessment and change. The criteria used for the assessment would then turn out to be the crucial difference between them. For Wilson the criteria would, in the first instance, define education in strictly logical terms, to do with learning and being above the level of nature and so on (23), and then the question of its moral value would be a further one and not a question of meaning. But for Frankena the two could not be separated. The question, for example, of what dispositions should be fostered would also be a question to do with the meaning of education. In short, while on both accounts educational questions give rise to moral issues and consequently to controversy, disagreement and the need for their justification, on Wilson's account this would not be a conceptual disagreement on Frankena's account it would be.

This brings us to the nub of the problem, of whether education should be accepted as an essentially contested concept as some have suggested it should. If we take Frankena's suggestion of adopting the evaluative use of education, then, because it is open-ended and actually has written into it, values that are usually various and conflicting ones, then education has to be seen as an essentially contestable concept (see below) while if we accept Wilson's stipulation, it does not.



How do we resolve a difference as fundamental as this and one crucial for the purpose of my thesis? For in setting out to explain in parts one and two the concept of education and, more specifically, in part three, the concept of physical education, I am already assuming that educational values have been written into their meaning. Whether, with regard to physical education, historically speaking, this was for reasons of convenience or prestige does not really matter. What matters now is whether they can be justified. In order to answer this I need to know in advance whether or not education should be accepted as an evaluative concept in the third sense given above, because if this cannot be demonstrated I am clearly wasting my time, for the overall intention behind my thesis will be judged to be misconceived from the outset. So I have to be sure philosophers like Frankena as opposed to Wilson are right.

But before we consider whether the use of the concept of education as an essentially contestable one can be justified, it would be useful to look at Gallie's article which prompted discussion in the first place on whether education should be counted as such a concept.

### iii GALLIE'S CRITERIA OF AN ESSENTIALLY CONTESTED CONCEPT

Gallie at the beginning of his article (already referred to, see p.6) suggests that when philosophical clarification is called for on the use of a term which is causing disagreement or confusion this could lead philosophers making one of three claims - either the philosopher might claim to discover and persuade others he had discovered a new meaning on which everyone could henceforth agree; or he might stipulate a new meaning for the contested term which, if accepted, would enable disagreement to be avoided in the future (clearly Wilson comes under this category); or, lastly, he might claim to prove or explain the necessity of the contested character of the concept in question (24). What Gallie has to say in the text of his article falls into this last category.

Gallie argues that there are certain concepts which are essentially contestable in nature; these have certain common characteristics. Firstly, the term given to the concept (e.g. a work of art) is used in a variety of ways, but where there is no one clearly defined defensible general



use which can be set up as the correct or standard use. Secondly, those who use the term in a particular way see that as the primary or only important function which the term in question fulfils. And thirdly, when those different uses are disclosed to everyone who uses the term, the dispute does not as one might expect (and as Wilson certainly does) come to an end, rather each party defends its particular use against all the other ones. The reason for this, Gallie argues, is not a psychological, but a logical one in that there are some concepts where there is no one proper use, but where the disputes which different uses give rise to are perfectly genuine and inevitable. In short, this means that these concepts are necessarily and essentially contestable ones (25).

Gallie, to illustrate his argument, uses an analogy of a game. In the game, while all the contestants are playing to the same rules, each team specialises in a distinctive method and style of play and it is in virtue of this, and not because of the number of points scored, that the championship is decided (where 'champion' means to have played the game best). Furthermore, there is no one set of criteria by which it can be decided what style of play is best and hence who the champions are. Instead there are different groups of supporters who have different ideas of what counts as skilful play and, while each group acknowledges the criteria that other teams are using, they do not accept them as the basis on which the championship should be decided. On the contrary, they try and convert other supporters to their own way of thinking. 'There is therefore', says Gallie, 'continuous competition between the contestants not only for acknowledgment as champions but for acceptance of the proper criteria of championship'. (26)

From this example Gallie postulates eight criteria of essential contestedness:

- (1) it is appraisive and it signifies an achievement;
- (2) this achievement is of an internally complex character, but its worth is attributed to it as a whole;
- (3) therefore, any explanation to its worth must include reference to the respective contribution of its various parts and there would be any number of rival descriptions of its total worth;
- (4) the achievement is open in character in that it admits of



modification in the light of changing circumstances which cannot be prescribed in advance;

- (5) to use an essentially contested concept means to use it against other uses both aggressively and defensively (27).

If Gallie had finished his analysis at this point it would be difficult not to agree with Wilson that it is impossible to make a distinction between where a concept or family of concepts is just confused and in need of clarification, and where there is disagreement over different interpretations because the concept is an essentially contestable one. But Gallie goes on to give two further criteria, because he himself recognises that, while the ones listed above provide the formally defining conditions of essential contestedness, they fail to distinguish the essentially contested concept from the kind of concept which can be shown as a result of analysis or experiment to be just radically confused (28).

The two further criteria given to make this distinction are:-

- (6) an essentially contested concept is derived from an original exemplar whose authority is acknowledged by all contestants;
- (7) the continuous contest of the concept enables the original exemplar's achievement to be sustained and developed. (29).

The importance of agreement here is paramount, because it gives us grounds to talk of the dispute being over the same concept as opposed to just the same term. Also, because the exemplar is universally recognised as an achievement, values can be said to be written into the concept and agreed upon at the very beginning of its history. If this was not the case, the contestants could consider that those who were operating with different values held different concepts to themselves. Wilson's point would then hold; the dispute would no longer be a conceptual one. But recognition of a given concept as essentially contested implies recognition of rival uses as being 'logically possible and humanly likely'. (30) It is also on the strength of the exemplar that Gallie draws his last criterion that:-

- (8) the continuous competition for acknowledgment enables the original exemplar's achievement to be sustained or developed in an optimum fashion (31).



But if it is the same exemplar that gives rise to the development of different qualities, all of which contribute to the sustaining of its initial achievement, one cannot help but wonder why they have to be in competition with each other, particularly as the contestants have to recognise and appreciate each other's values as legitimate. Obviously the contest does not follow simply from the concept being an evaluative one; rather it follows from two main reasons: firstly, from the nature of the exemplar, which is 'internally complex', 'variously describable' and 'peculiarly open', so it can give rise to almost countless lines of descent (32). Secondly, from the fact that the contest is largely over the weighting different values are to be given and, where each claimant believes the values they uphold are of primary importance and because they are thought to pin point the essential nature of the exemplar. It is for this reason it can be said that the criteria each contestant champions are all trying to occupy the same conceptual space.

Here again, it is because the values however divergent are rooted back in the same exemplar that Gallie is able to declare the contest is a logically proper one, and not simply a question of 'emotional conversion, the appropriate engineering from one point of view to another or of causal explanation'. (33) This means that even if a competitor fails to win anyone over to his side, nevertheless the logical justification of what he says will still be recognised. It is for this reason that Gallie maintains that even apparently endless disputes can be recognised to have a definite logical force and that the contest is acknowledged to have permanent potential critical value.

Without the authority of the exemplar, then, the contest would no longer be a conceptual one. But there are those who would question whether the exemplar can do the job required of it, the answer to which is crucial and is discussed below. At the same time having now looked at all seven of Gallie's criteria we are also in a position to see if these criteria can, in any case, be applied to the subject of education. In this context it would be useful to refer to A. Hartnett's and M. Naish's publication, 'Theory and Practice of Education', Volume I, (34), because in this book this is exactly what is attempted.



#### iv IS EDUCATION AN ESSENTIALLY CONTESTED CONCEPT?

The authors have no difficulty with the first five criteria. Education, they say, does fulfil them in that it is essentially an achievement, open in character and internally complex, and in that it does give rise to different values and attitudes of which different parties differ in the order of importance to be given to them, and which are contested under the name of education in educational debates about what should go on in schools, colleges and universities. (35)

But when they come to the sixth and seventh criteria, because education does not have an exemplar similar, say, to the Christian life, they admit it is much harder to show whether it fulfils these two criteria as well. Nevertheless, they suggest providing a certain latitude is given to the notion of an exemplar and because it is possible to identify certain educational traditions, then education can be said to fulfil these two criteria.

But it seems to me they are only able to do this because they do not consider in any detail what would constitute an exemplar of education on which there could be common agreement. Considering how crucial the sixth condition is, to the whole justification of essentially contested concepts, it is rather surprising they deal with it so briefly and uncritically. If they had taken the trouble to examine it more thoroughly I think they would have found it cannot do the job required of it. This is because the idea of an exemplar which provides a historical landmark and from which various traditions can be traced does not seem to hold with education, rather the opposite is the case. We have different traditions (e.g. Greek liberal education, classical humanism and child-centred education) which are not at all sufficiently similar to enable us to talk about one common exemplar. Indeed some of the most important educational values which are championed today, for example, those to do with equality, do not enjoy a tradition at all, or certainly not a very long one.

The question can also be raised whether the exemplar may be inadequate for its purpose in other contexts as well. This is certainly the belief of E. Gellner. In his article 'The Concept of Story' (36), in which he



reviews Gallie's book, 'Philosophy and the Historical Understanding' (37), while he accepts the notion of an essentially contested concept as legitimate, he actually considers the last two criteria do an injustice to the very idea of essential contestability, and by applying them to the examples that Gallie himself gives, he concludes the exemplar cannot do the job required of it (38). His main objection to the fact that the derivation of an essentially contestable concept must come from an original exemplar, whose authority is acknowledged by all the contestants' uses of the concept, is in effect, an application of the 'genetic fallacy' argument. For Gellner maintains:

'the present functioning of a concept is logically independent of its history and that recognition of an essentially contestable concept must be possible on the present (my italics) working of a concept, irrespective of its real history' (39).

However, in spite of the criticisms Gellner makes and there are others (40), he still recognises in principle the value of what Gallie is saying. He acknowledges that often when philosophers were engaged in conceptual analysis, in order to get clearer on meaning, their analyses were in fact saturated with particular values, and that Gallie's account reflects accurately what is often a moral debate. But Gellner does not seem to think it is possible to distinguish essentially contestable concepts from those which are just radically confused and neither does he think it matters. (41).

But surely it does matter, for how otherwise are we to distinguish between a dispute over the use of a term as opposed to the meaning of the same concept? As Gallie himself recognised the importance of the exemplar lay in the need for agreement at least to a certain level, or, up to a certain point. The exemplar provided an achievement that was universally recognised by all the contestants; without that agreement some could argue (as Wilson undoubtedly would) that because all the contestants are advocating different values they are not competing over the same concept - indeed they are not competing over a concept at all.

In order, then, for essentially contested concepts to be justified as logically proper we need to find some way of doing this without having to rely on historically justifying conditions.



Now, what I wish to suggest is that we can do this if we can find in certain concepts a basic level of agreement operating at the present time (which may or may not be due to historical reasons) in the underlying criteria of the concepts in question, providing these criteria are evaluative as well as descriptive in nature. For example, with regard to education, I would argue it is possible to identify pre-conditions which give rise to contestable definitions (see below) which because they are evaluative but also necessarily agreed upon, could be used to replace the role of the exemplar. Furthermore, this pattern depends on normative conditions being internal to the concept and, therefore, escapes Gellner's main criticism of the exemplar that it assumes agreement from a kind of divine external view point. (42).

However, it may not be sufficient to fulfil Gallie's last criterion that the use of the concept enables the values on which there is agreement to be sustained or developed in optimum fashion, for it is difficult to see how this can be decided without there being an overall and overriding judgment and how could this, as a judgment, have conceptual and therefore necessarily internal validity? But this is not crucial, for the other six criteria can stand without it, so that enough has been said to show that the idea of an essentially contested concept can be taken as a logically proper one and that education can be counted as one of them. It is therefore now possible to return, finally to the question of whether this use is justified or, whether, as Wilson claims, evaluative disputes in education should, nevertheless, come after and not be part of conceptual ones.

#### v CAN THE USE OF 'EDUCATION' AS AN ESSENTIALLY CONTESTED CONCEPT BE JUSTIFIED?

In an answer to this I would like to make five main points: -

- (1) Frankena's defence of the evaluative use of education seems to me to be a sound one in that if the meaning of education is restricted to descriptive criteria, it encourages the continuation of the status quo and makes it difficult to ask the overriding questions of justification.



- (2) Wilson is being stipulative not only in suggesting education should be limited to its descriptive use, but in suggesting what that description should entail. To accept his stipulation, to restrict the defining characteristics to only the very basic preconditions to do with learning and being a person would be to cut the meaning of education short; for while it is not incorrect to give only basic criteria as a definition, it is also true to say that it will be a very limited one (see below). Just as if someone gave a definition of art in the way Wilson does as, 'it isn't supposed to be of any use, it's just meant to look pretty/sound exciting/give you a special kind of pleasure/be an interesting story and somebody's created it, probably for that reason' (43), we might wonder if he has any real understanding of the concept of art at all; so with education if only preconditions were stated one could say with some justification, but you haven't begun to define education.'
- (3) It is difficult to see, in any case, how Wilson can stop education being an evaluative concept when values are already presupposed in the preconditions (for example to do with being a person) that have to be given if we are to define education at all and when it is these values which give rise to further values that later become contestable. The last criterion which Wilson gives is that:

'education is directed at, or for the benefit of (my italics), people as such taking all or most of the important aspects of a person into consideration,' (44)

Presumably, values presupposed here, would have to be described in an external descriptive fashion and not in a committed or prescriptive one. But if there is no commitment and no interested parties why is there any interest in analysing the meaning of education in the first place? If, for example, it does not matter what goes on in schools under the name of education, if our only interest is in conceptual analysis for its own sake, then why have we picked out education as being particularly worthy of analysis?

- (4) Wilson expresses the fear that if value judgments are allowed to be written into the meaning of education, then what education means



just becomes a matter of ideological preference even prejudice. But this does not do justice to the fact that concepts, even evaluative ones, if they are to be meaningful and to become common currency amongst language users, must command interpersonal agreement. If values are written into a concept which is essentially common property then there is also the need for justification before it can secure general and universal agreement. For this reason one can often find that evaluative concepts provide evidence for very secure or permanently held values (hence the plausibility of Gallie's idea of the exemplar providing historically justifying conditions).

- (5) Following on from (4), it can be said that a lot of the force of Wilson's argument disappears once the exact criteria of essential contestability are recognised, because, as Gallie himself forcibly argues, not any kind of ideological dispute is a conceptual one. A point, it would seem to me, was not brought out sufficiently by Hartnett and Naish, who tend to take just any disagreement in education to provide evidence for its essential contestability (45). They therefore fail to distinguish between those that do and those that do not fulfil the necessary criteria for essential contestability. It is not sufficient, for example, that a particular interested party wishes to uphold certain values as being the most important in education. For these values to become definitive, certainly wholesale agreement is not necessary, but there must at least be recognition of this use as 'proper' and 'correct' as against their opponent's uses, whose validity they must also recognise. This means that completely arbitrary definitions, for example, are just ruled out as logically improper.

It is only because of the opponent's acknowledgment of the validity of what other persons are contesting that their argument can be said to have logical, as opposed to just 'contingently persuasive force'. This acknowledgment is only possible because there is a basis of agreement from which values can be launched and justified. This also makes the fulfilment of Gallie's last criterion, if not logically necessary, at least humanly likely, in that it may make it possible for there to be mutual agreement on the benefit of the contest in that it enables the whole enterprise to go forward. But many of



the disputes in education are not of this nature. For example, when persons put forward particular aims or ideologies of education but are not remotely aware of other positions, or certainly not all of them, which stand in opposition to their own, let alone that they should be contesting against them if what they have to say is to carry conceptual weight. Alternatively, while they may be aware of other opposing view points they may not see their purpose to argue against them by rational argument but rather to knock them out of the contest all together.

Bearing this distinction in mind, i.e. between those disputes that fulfil the criteria of essential contestability and those that do not, it is quite possible to uphold the essentially contestable nature of education and still, with Wilson, to deplore and rule out as improper those people in general who try to smuggle in their preferred ideologies into certain categories under some disguise or other, and those philosophers in particular who profess to analysing concepts but are only expressing a line (46), and we can agree on the need for logical argument in any attempt to analyse and to justify education.

## vi ESSENTIALLY CONTESTING PHILOSOPHERS OF EDUCATION

While it is no doubt fairly easy to forgive those engaged in educational discourse who are not philosophers for trying to get their values accepted by making them definitional, but without due regard to the criteria an essentially contestable concept demands, it is much more difficult to forgive the philosopher, who, because part of his business is as a conceptual analyst, should know an essentially contestable concept when he sees one and be sensitive to this when it comes to its analysis and justification. Unfortunately, philosophers have been as guilty as anyone else and this has led to two characteristic mistakes. Either, the philosopher has tried to get what are evaluative and, therefore, highly contestable judgments on the nature of education, accepted only on the grounds that they are tight logical incontestable truths, and because of this they have been criticised for trying to fabricate a concept;



or, the philosopher anxious only to be a pure analyst has failed to say anything substantive or practically helpful. In so doing they have realised Frankena's worst fears in encouraging conservatism and the acceptance of the status quo.

Of course, it would be possible for this latter kind of philosopher to recognise that education is essentially contestable but not to enter the contest himself. He could sit on the side lines and discern accurately what was going on. He could detect and report on shifts of meaning, he could even act as referee and rule improper uses out of court. But in fact this kind of philosopher of education (fortunately one might say if the arguments given so far have carried any weight) is fairly scarce. On the whole the philosophers who have committed the first kind of mistake have been much more plentiful. This philosopher, who is concerned with giving judgments and their justification as well as with the analysis of concepts, has, on the other hand, no choice I would argue, but to recognise that he is a contestant himself. One of the main mistakes philosophers of education have made previously was in thinking that they could give normative definitions, which, because they were supported by logical argument and necessary truth, were not essentially contestable.

One reason why this happened was because philosophers did not appreciate the definitional level at which they were operating (see below). Fearful of being stipulative or prescriptive and seeing their task of providing a logical basis from which aims could be launched and justified, they saw themselves as operating at the most basic of levels, one that provided a definition of education which was, in some sense, fundamentally true and of practical value because it was not contestable. Hence the considerable use of transcendental arguments to justify education. Although it was always expected that other philosophers would be critical of their accounts, and would, for example, expose any fallacies or inconsistencies, they were still put forward as non-contestable, then either they stood the test of criticism and could then be deemed 'correct', and that the philosopher had got it 'right' or it failed the test and was then rejected out of hand.

Unfortunately, most accounts of this nature because they were put



forward as definitions at a very basic level, did fail. They came under all the criticism that philosophers like W. Dray (47) and G. Reddiford (48) have made, not to mention those that numerous sociologists have been only too keen to give, and as a consequence have generally been discredited. At worst, they have been rejected wholesale; at best, they have been taken up by non-philosophers engaged in education to play a different game according to less stringent rules. As a reaction to all this there is now a danger that philosophers will become obsessed with stating only the existing usage of the concept, or with only examining the preconditions of education, that as a matter of logical necessity must be incontestable (for example in finding out what mileage can be gained from the concept of learning). If this does happen it seems to me they can then be rightly criticised for not going far enough in not beginning to define education. There is a difference after all, between stating and examining concepts on which the meaning of education depends and actually giving that meaning. Also, as I have already argued, there is good reason to suggest that it is only possible to give that meaning if one also presupposes or makes explicit an evaluative point of view, and because of the many viewpoints the preconditions can generate, meanings of education are essentially contestable ones, even for the philosopher. The upshot of this being that if the philosopher of education wishes to persist in giving definitions of education (rather than becoming a pure observer), then he has no choice but to accept that he is making value judgments rather than just analyses, and that what he has to say will have to be justified under the description of 'essential contestability'.

In the past, what philosophers of education have perhaps paid insufficient attention to is that definitions admit of degrees. The idea, generally that meaning itself admits to degrees is not often argued for, rather what is acknowledged is that understanding a particular meaning or set of meanings admits of degrees. But the fact it is possible to describe understanding in this way is only because there are, in the first instance, degrees of meaning. The notion of degrees of meaning is logically prior to the ideas of there being degrees of understanding something.

This can be explained in the following way:



First of all, to talk of degrees of understanding presupposes the idea of progression, one is coming to understand X. This implies there are constitutive parts of X, and depending on the nature of X these can be hierarchical. To say one is learning more about X is to say one is getting nearer to understanding X itself.

Secondly, it is only because stages of understanding are actually constitutive of X that one can say one has, at a particular moment in time, a partial understanding of X, rather than an understanding of something else, say Y, which may be necessary for an understanding of X but is not a part of X. Sometimes although what is understood is a constitutive part one may consider that this understanding is not sufficiently great for us to say he has even a partial understanding of X. It is only as a person's understanding develops and he gets nearer to a complete understanding that we feel justified in saying now he is beginning to understand, for example, the quantum theory. This is not a clear cut matter, deciding when the time has come may be debatable, it will certainly be a matter of judgment by those who already have a complete understanding of the concept.

Clearly, not all concepts are like this, but the concept of education is. Furthermore, not only does its meaning admit of degrees (therefore one cannot understand the concept of education until one has an understanding of what constitutes learning) it is as I have just argued, contestable. Furthermore, and this is what it makes it so interesting, it is not until the stage is reached of understanding those criteria that are contestable that we feel justified in saying now the person has begun to understand the concept.

Now, philosophers of education cannot be accused of not reaching that stage but what they can be accused of is not recognising that they have reached this stage and that what they are putting forward as an analysis and justification of education is contestable even if it is supported by logical argument, and which can occur long before the level of being highly stipulative and stating aims. However, because this happens it does not necessarily diminish its worth as a definition, providing it is seen for what it is - essentially contestable, owing its logically persuasive force, firstly to the logical connection it has with the first stage where



there is agreement, secondly, to its open-ended and non-stipulative nature and, thirdly to recognition of the definitions of other contestants, the legitimacy of which is acknowledged and without which the value of this particular definition could not be recognised.

What I am suggesting here, is that given education is evaluatively normative (values are written into its meaning) and given that the definition of education admits of degrees, then, on this basis it would be possible to postulate three levels of normative definitions:-

- (1) the underlying conditions which are incontestable (although they cause disagreement this is, in principle, resolvable) and which presuppose certain value judgments which could however just be stated in an external descriptive sense,
- (2) an evaluative and logical model - arising from stage one and justified by it, now evaluatively prescriptive, but open-ended and non-arbitrary,
- (3) aims of education, justified on the basis of the second level of definition used prescriptively and substantively.

If these levels were accepted, and providing philosophers still wished to justify and prescribe and not simply describe and analyse, I can see no reason why they should not take part in defining education beyond the first stage and become essentially contesting philosophers. In fact, with the peculiar skill of the philosopher, his capacity for rational thought and logical argument he should be a particularly strong contestant and one that can be no longer accused of conceptual manipulation whether as the result of self deception or honest endeavour. (As a consequence in the field of practical education someone may even listen!) Following on from this, there is no reason why definitions of education, already rejected because they were offered as definitions operative at an incontestable stage, could not be reinstated as logical, but essentially contestable models at a higher level. They could then provide a half way house between the preconditions from which they would be derived and the substantive aims which would arise from them. At the second level, therefore, they would have to remain open-ended. One very practical consequence if this suggestion was taken up, would be that philosophers of education would no longer be able to see their justifications as self-



contained separate from the efforts of other philosophers. They would have to become aware of other models they were contesting against and emphasise their own values in contrast to those predominant in another model. This, far from undermining a justification would strengthen it. There is always a danger in giving a justification that it is done in isolation, at best, showing the shortcomings of another in order to show the need for one's own. Of course, this is not to say that even with this latitude that certain accounts cannot be ruled out as logically improper. Clearly this would happen if a model failed to fulfil any of the criteria of essential contestedness, or, if a philosopher still insisted his definition was incontestable, for example, if G. Langford continued to insist that education was in its most fundamental sense to become a person.

It is not difficult to think of several definitions, some of which have been offered in the past at a very fundamental level, which would escape the kind of criticism Wilson makes if put forward at a higher level. For example J. Dewey's idea that education is growth (49), A.N. Whitehead's contention that education is the acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge (50), P. Hirst's justification of liberal education (51), R.S. Downie's and E. Telfer's narrow conception of intellectual education (52), R. Dearden's suggestion that education is to do with the development of autonomy (53) or M. Warnock's ideal of education as the cultivation of the imagination (54). These, I suggest could be accepted as contestable models at a second level, providing: (1) they can be shown to arise out of the preconditions of education, (2) they are put forward as a justification for particular educational values supported by logical and rational argument, (3) that they have a certain openness so they can escape the charge of arbitrariness or stipulation (for example, that one can talk of developing autonomy without stipulating how a person should exercise it, or of knowledge and understanding without saying what a person should know), (4) they are forward looking serving a prescriptive purpose, so that given other considerations (for example, the nature of knowledge, the human condition, the nature of a particular society), certain aims can be said to arise from them.

It might be wondered, if these models are taken from underlying conditions where there is agreement, why these models have to be in competition with each other, obviously this does not follow just



from the fact that each one is different. It will be remembered that in a contest over the meaning of a concept, because each contestant has to recognise the values of other contestants, the competition is largely over a question of the priority to be given to different values. It is only for this reason that contesting definitions can be said to be trying to occupy the same conceptual space. With regard to the concept of education, therefore, each definition would have to be put forward as encompassing those values which are believed to be at the heart or essential nature of education.

However, if certain practical questions had to be answered it might be conceded that certain models would serve the purpose better than others. This would mean that while only the intrinsic worth of each model was at stake, then, definitions at a second level would remain essentially contestable, but when considered in terms of practical usefulness in a particular situation, it may be accepted that one model may show advantages or do the job better over another. This might be the case if we were only interested in justifying a part of education, for example, liberal education, primary education, art education, physical education.

Following on from this, it would now be appropriate for me to indicate my own intentions in putting forward a justification for physical education. Having defended education as an evaluative notion, where its definition admits of degrees and which because of this it becomes an essentially contestable concept at a certain level of definition, I now wish to use the arguments and suggestions I have already given for the purpose of my own thesis.

First of all, in Parts One and Two, I shall build up a logical and evaluative model of education i.e. one that has value judgments written into it, but which is still based on logical and rational argument. I shall argue that this model is valid and of value even though contestable, because it can be shown that: - (a) it is open-ended, (b) it can be defended against other models or 'uses' of education, (c) its legitimacy and justification is derived from the basic level of giving preconditions on which there is already agreement. Then in Part Three on the basis of the meaning of education I have put forward and defended, I shall



after having defined the subject matter of physical education, go on to justify it. However, it will be beyond the scope of what I have to say in this thesis to go on to the third level of specifically prescribing aims of education or of physical education for I would see this as requiring further research in its own right .

What I need to do now, then, is to examine what the preconditions of education might be, for it is only from this basis that I can launch any kind of credible, even though contestable, definition of education into the second stage. It is an examination of these preconditions which will provide the subject matter of the next chapter.

## vii SUMMARY

In this chapter I have argued that :-

- (1) there has been endless disagreement over the meaning of education;
- (2) this disagreement will not simply come to an end as Wilson hopes by stipulating that conceptual questions should be kept separate from evaluative ones, and this is because education is a morally evaluative concept, which means that analysing it necessarily involves making or presupposing value judgments;
- (3) because education is open-ended and presupposes, or actually has written in, values that are usually various and conflicting ones, and because defining education admits of degrees, then it can be correctly described as an essentially contestable concept, that is, providing it is accepted that the basic preconditions on which there is agreement can replace the role of the exemplar;
- (4) to use education as an essentially contestable concept has certain advantages:-
  - (a) if the meaning of education is restricted to non-evaluative criteria it encourages the continuation of the status quo and makes it difficult to ask the overriding question of justification,



- (b) it does justice to education as a concept where its analysis admits of degrees; to stop short of evaluative questions is to lay oneself open to the charge that one has not begun to define education, particularly as values are presupposed even in the underlying conditions of meaning (e.g. to do with being a person),
  - (c) there is no reason why just because values are written into the meaning of education, they have to be idiosyncratic or a matter of prejudice, rather it demands justification and universal agreement if values are to be accepted as conceptual,
  - (d) not any kind of contestable definition of education will count; some can be ruled out if they fail to fulfil the criteria of essential contestability;
- (5) Philosophers in the past did not give enough attention to the definitional level at which they were operating, so that what were in fact contestable definitions, were put forward as being necessarily and fundamentally true - at the most basic of levels. As a consequence many accounts have been discredited.
- (6) There is no reason, now, however, why philosophers should not put forward contestable definitions, providing they recognise them for what they are, and are prepared to work at three distinct levels of definition:-
- (a) giving underlying conditions which are incontestable (although there may be disagreement, in principle it is resolvable) and which presuppose certain values (but which could just be given in an external descriptive sense),
  - (b) justifying an evaluative and logical model arising from stage one, but open-ended and non-arbitrary providing a half way house but which is essentially contestable,
  - (c) giving aims of education, justified on the basis of the second level of definition used prescriptively and substantively.



## FOOTNOTES

- 1 J. Wilson, 'Concepts, Contestability and The Philosophy of Education', in Journal of Philosophy of Education Vol.15 (1981).
- 2 Ibid., p.5.
- 3 W.B. Gallie, 'Essentially Contested Concepts', in Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Vol. LVI (1955-6).
- 4 J. Wilson, op. cit., p.5. He also gives the example of 'mass'.
- 5 See, for example, R.S. Peters, Ethics and Education, (George Allen and Unwin Ltd. 1966). pp 32-35.
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- 8 See D. Davidson, 'Truth and Meaning', Synthesis, (1967).
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- 12 See P.F. Strawson's article, 'Meaning and Truth', op. cit. pp, 186-189.
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- 21 W.F. Frankena, op. cit., p.23.
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- 24 W.B. Gallie, op. cit., p.167.
- 25 Ibid., p.169.
- 26 Ibid., p.171.
- 27 Ibid., pp 171-172.



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- 29 Ibid., p.180.
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- 38 E. Gellner, op. cit., p.50.
- 39 Ibid., p.50.
- 40 Ibid., p.55.
- 41 Ibid., p.53.
- 42 Ibid., p.57.
- 43 J. Wilson, 'Concepts, Contestability and the Philosophy of Education', op. cit., p.8.
- 44 Ibid., p.8.
- 45 A. Hartnett and M. Naish, op. cit., pp 78-79.



- 46 J. Wilson, *ibid.*, p.10.
- 47 See, for example, W.H. Dray, 'Aims of Education. A Conceptual Inquiry', in The Philosophy of Education, ed. R.S. Peters,(Oxford University Press, 1973.)
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**CHAPTER TWO: THE PRECONDITIONS OF THE  
CONCEPT OF EDUCATION**

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## CHAPTER TWO: THE PRE-CONDITIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION

Recently, philosophers, in trying to say something about education on which we might all agree, have been keen to point out that at the very least education denotes learning! However, it is realized that education does not just denote any kind of learning. R.S. Peters, for example, says that it must be learning which would rule out changes in behaviour due to some causal process, and which would imply 'mastering something or coming up to some standard as the result of experience'.(1) He describes the impact which this learning has on the person:

'Education surely develops a person's awareness by enlarging, deepening and extending it. Its impact is cognitive, but it also transforms and regulates a person's attitudes, emotions, wants and actions because all of these presuppose awareness and are impregnated with beliefs' (2).

It is a transformation which is over and above the development of those features necessary to become a person but falls short of the transformation of the whole personality. This is because Peters argues, the major feature of a person's personality is his temperament which is singularly resistant to learning. Now, this looks very hopeful as a means of providing the underlying conditions that we are looking for, for if education is not centrally concerned with learning it is difficult to think what it could be concerned with. But as, clearly, not all kinds of learning constitute education this stands in need of closer examination. We need to know:

- (i) what might be understood by the concept of learning; and
- (ii) what conditions have to be fulfilled before it can be said to be of educational value.

### i THE CONCEPT OF LEARNING

Firstly, learning as a concept is normative, our ability to describe a process of learning or what has actually been learnt presupposes an



understanding of what counts, as reaching a certain standard, giving a correct answer, performing successfully at whatever it might be (although it may be as basic as pressing a level to release a food pellet). Learning, as an activity is therefore rule-governed, being able to see it has taken place presupposes knowledge of what those rules are. This seems to me, to be true even in those cases where learning is defined in terms of permanent changes in behaviour, which may be due to a process of strict conditioning, for not any permanent change in behaviour would count as learning, at the very least it would have to be shown that the animal is able to do what previously it was not able to do. It is at least this which provides the norm or standard by which a change in behaviour could be assessed as learning. What counts as a standard, an 'achievement', mastery, a 'successful' performance or simply normative behaviour, depends on agreement which is only possible in a public and social world. The concept of learning, regardless of what, or to whom it is being applied, therefore presupposes such a world and is unintelligible without it. This means education, because it involves learning, can only be understood in a social context, but as this is true of all learning, at least in some sense, then this does not in itself enable us to distinguish learning which has educational value from learning which has not. Indeed, it does not even enable us to say that learning of any kind is of value. The words 'achievement' and 'success' which are used above, being only used in the weak sense to mean no more than 'coming up to a mark' or to imply that certain criteria have been fulfilled. It is therefore always a further question whether what is learnt, is an achievement in the strong sense of the word, whether it has, for example, truth value or moral worth, or any kind of value for that matter. When we say, then, that learning is necessarily an 'achievement' this does not, therefore, give us any reason to deny that sometimes people learn bad habits, information that is false and to perform actions that are essentially trivial.

It is, however, possible to argue, on the lines that John White has argued, that to be able to talk of learning what is false or incorrect, still presupposes norms of correctness and truth in assessing what has been learnt and being able to show anything has been learnt at all (3). White says, it could not be the case that all informational learning were of what is false for if that was so social life would be impossible; that there must be some learning of true information in any human society, is therefore also a



necessary truth and 'that learning true information is conceptually prior to learning false information' (4).

This kind of argument like Peter Winch's social justification of truth telling (5) seems to me to be fundamentally correct. And subsequently one could argue that because education must necessarily involve initiation into a social world, learning which has educational value must presuppose certain social values on which the existence and continuation of any human society depends. Learning to count as education will, therefore, at least to a degree, be concerned with what is true and rationally defensible; and it can also be said that it will presuppose other kinds of value which are socially relative to do with what is regarded by a particular society as instrumentally and intrinsically worthwhile, and these will rule out the trivial, and in an interpersonal context, the immoral.

Educational learning, once it is put in a social context will also be seen to fulfil criteria that will give it a progressive form and coherence. Learning to have educational value cannot be disjointed pieces of information or isolated skills, rather it will necessarily fall into a pattern or structure in relation to a whole way of life.

Secondly, to know that learning has taken place, it is not enough to have ascertained that someone has come up to a particular mark or standard, (for example that he can perform a particular task successfully), for this capacity may have been innate and its acquisition the result of physiological maturation, rather we also need to know how the learning took place. Now there are several ways of looking at this:

For example, there are those who would emphasize the logical tie up of the process of learning with the content of what is to be learnt. For example, P.Hirst emphasizes that where the subject matter has a logical structure, then, it is only by understanding this structure that one can know what must be done for learning to come about and to progress (6). It is, therefore, up to the experts to determine how the learning in a particular field will take place.

On the other hand, there are those who would define the learning process not in logical, but in behavioural terms. The psychologist, for example,



often describes it as any more or less permanent change in behaviour which is the result of experience (7). However, he does usually acknowledge that the learner has to play some kind of active part in bringing the learnt behaviour about, that the 'achievement' of the animal or person cannot just be the result of maturation or some causal process e.g. the effects of a drug. But the part the learner plays may be a very minimal one; for some psychologists it may involve no more than a reflex action or at most a perceptual response to a particular situation (for example as in operant conditioning). The arguments against defining learning in these terms and in support of a definition that at least acknowledges that learning must involve the use of experience and not just be the result of it are already well rehearsed. But it depends on which definition of learning one supports whether these arguments carry any weight or not.

For some, where the 'correct' behaviour is all important, providing it is the result of experience, as opposed to, say, maturation, then it is not even necessary that the learner should be aware of what he has learnt or is about to learn. Certainly, if only living organisms can be subjects of learning then there must be some kind of awareness when learning takes place, but this may be very limited to the reward they receive at the end of the activity or performance; or they may have some idea of what they have just 'learnt', but not the whole, or even the right idea (certainly they will not have the awareness the experimenter has).

But here again a different view can be taken: that this is only possible in certain situations, for example, where learning is the result of conditioning, but that where learning demands understanding then at least an awareness of the principles behind what is being done is required by the learner, as Hamlyn has suggested (8). Clearly there is a crucial distinction between what the animal or person has 'learnt' in terms of correct behavioural response, and what the animal or person conceives himself as doing, but whether these would have to coincide would depend, not only on what was being learnt, but also on the concept of learning with which one was operating.

If a very extreme position was taken, it may be thought that all that was needed for something to be a case of learning would be the successful



performance or correct reply where it had not previously existed. This may seem very dubious as a case of learning because the learner is no more than a passive recipient, and yet it is a view which is quite compatible with a neurological definition. B.R. Bugelski, for example, defines the learning process as :

'the formation of associations between neural events (consequence of stimulation)..... The exact physiological nature need not concern us as long as there is a functional relationship formed so that one neural event is followed by another' (9).

And on a mechanistic definition of learning it might be thought legitimate to say that learning can occur by programming directly into the brain. The person would, in this case, simply find he knows how to do something, or has acquired new beliefs or knowledge he did not have before.

Now these are concepts of learning which contrast sharply with the concept of learning which is operative in common usage where the idea of personal agency is all important, and this is true whether learning is construed in terms of the acquisition of knowledge or in terms of acquiring certain capacities or both.

The idea of learning being essentially connected with knowledge where knowledge is understood as propositional knowledge has been well argued for by philosophers. For example, D. Hamlyn, in his article 'Human Learning' puts forward the thesis that, 'learning must at least involve the acquisition of knowledge through experience and that changes in behaviour due to learning must be the result of new knowledge' (10). While, J. White argues that learning must imply knowing and this is because of the logical connections between the concept and certain institutions and practices (11). And Langford emphasizes the link between the concepts of learning and true belief (12).

In fact some philosophers go so far as to suggest that propositional knowledge is the common thread running through all cases of learning (13), and this would make it difficult to talk of anything other than human learning. However, this seems to me to be unduly restrictive, for while a lot of human learning is centrally concerned with the acquisition of knowledge of this kind, learning can also involve learning 'how' or



learning 'to', as well as learning 'that', and where the achievement is signified by what one is able to do rather than by the propositions that one knows.

It is interesting that while we can describe the acquisition of 'knowledge that' as a case of learning, even where no deliberate or intentional act on our part is involved. For example, when we just receive a piece of information - 'I learnt that my neighbour's children had whooping cough, but I do not know where, how or when I learnt it - for all I know the information may have been programmed directly into my brain'. It is just when what is learnt is not solely concerned with propositional knowledge that the idea of personal agency becomes so crucial. If, for instance, a person can be described as learning to master an activity, skill or habit ( cases of learning 'to') then learning is often a question of practice, of trying to get it right, of applying oneself diligently to the task in hand. If this kind of effort was found to be missing but the ability was still acquired, we are likely to question whether or not it was learnt, and we are likely to wonder if it was not simply the result of physical maturation, or that it just happened. For example, learning to sprint, to appreciate music, to love someone, we describe these as instances of learning, not just because of what we have come to know, but because of what we have learnt to accomplish, which cannot be reduced to knowing that. But this is not to say that learning to do certain things has always to be found to be difficult. It is not impossible for someone to learn how for instance, to sprint, the first time he tries, (although the nature of most human activities makes this unlikely). What remains crucial is that we can be sure the ability was not just due to some causal process and that it was the result of intentional action on the part of the performer.

However, there are those like White and Hamlyn who would wish to rule these out as central cases of learning, unless it can be shown that propositional knowledge is, after all, the distinguishing mark. Hamlyn argues, for example, that we can only talk of learning to love someone if this kind of knowledge is involved indirectly. He says, if I have learned to love someone rather than merely come to love them, my love follows upon and exists in virtue of what I have come to know. But this kind of argument fails to fill the gap between having the knowledge and having the capacity. One that if it is filled by the idea of personal agency surely



entitles us to say that capacity is a learnt one and not one that we have just found ourselves possessing. The alternative would be, through stipulation, to rule out certain habits, dispositions and attitudes as possible objects of learning, and I cannot see how this can be justified when the idea of learning how to do certain things is just as crucial to our understanding of learning as learning that certain things are true. However, it may be possible to argue that knowledge is the common thread running through all cases of learning if one is prepared to accept that knowledge can be practical as well as propositional. See chapter eleven for a discussion on the distinction between these two kinds of knowledge.

## ii LEARNING AND THE CONCEPT OF THE PERSON

The concept of learning, then, may have different interpretations and this in itself can be a source of confusion and controversy. It is therefore essential to be able to state what kinds of learning would be presupposed by the notion of education. If, for example, a person's behavioural response showed an extensive amount of knowledge, an ability to solve problems, a wide range of physical skills all of which came up to agreed public standards, why would it matter that it had been acquired as a result of conditioning, hypnosis, programming the brain or some other causal process?

What is important here, is that the reason it does matter, does not hinge simply on our concept of learning but on our concept of the person. For any meaning of education that might be put forward presupposes the latter as well as the former concept, 'education is only achieved by persons', is not a contingent truth but a logically necessary one. Learning to have educational value must take into account what is implied in being a person, that is, as a self-determining agent and a centre of experience. This is why learning which is better described in terms of what happens to a person, because of some causal process is ruled out, and learning which is a result of what a person does and can be said to have experienced (as well as being seen to come up to a certain standard) is central to the meaning of education.



But even the phrase 'what a person does' needs further consideration. If learning as an educational achievement has to be measured in personal as well as social terms then the actions and activities a person carries out must mean more than the ability to give behavioural responses. If it could be shown that what a person had learnt meant no more than the ability to give the correct answer, perform the required task, act in the appropriate way to a given stimulus, rather as we might condition an animal, programme a computer, or simply put a coin in the slot of a machine, and hear a pre-recorded message, then, what has been 'achieved' is either not learning or is only learning (depending on the concept of learning being adhered to) and either way has not begun to count as education. Clearly those who would discount causal methods as forms of learning already presuppose an understanding of the person in the concept with which they are operating. If learning is to be seen as education, not only has it to fulfil the relevant public standards, but to realise those basic human capacities which define the person; his ability for thought, to initiate action, to have intentions, purposes, feelings and so on. It will necessarily follow from this that if what a person is learning demands understanding he will have to be fully aware of his own actions including knowledge however limited it may be (particularly in the early stages) of what he is learning and when he has learnt it.

This also explains why learning must be seen to have a transforming effect. If what a person can be said to have learnt made no difference to him in his beliefs, attitudes and general awareness of the world, then although learning may have resulted in behavioural changes that can be detected, recorded and assessed, it still does not necessarily count as education, because it has yet to be shown that the person has changed qua person. It is for this reason that I would like to suggest that in a most fundamental sense education is concerned with learning which promotes the development of the person qua person (14).

In saying this I would recognise, however, that I am now stating more than the underlying conditions of education and that what I am suggesting as a definition has already become contestable; furthermore, that what I have to say from now on will become increasingly so.

The reasons why learning fails to make any lasting impact on the person



and, therefore, does not have any educational significance may be difficult to assess. J. Dewey in 'Experience and Education' (15) suggests that, everyone looks back and wonders what happened to all their knowledge which they acquired in the past. He says the reason for this lies not in what was learnt but how it was learnt, because at the time knowledge was compartmentalised and taught in isolation from other things it failed to make any connection with the rest of our experiences. Although Dewey's concept of education as growth was for many reasons inadequate he at least recognised certain conceptual truths about the nature of education, not only because he conceived of the learner as an active agent, but because he put experience at the centre of his account (experience that the person shared with others because of common concerns and purposes). Although experience was too narrowly defined in only pragmatic terms, at least the learning process was assessed not only in the short term but also by the extent to which it presented future experiences (for example, arousing curiosity, making later understanding possible, determining attitudes including the desire to go on learning). Dewey's conception of education could, therefore, be said to depend not only on what was learnt but also on the transforming effect it had on the learner as a person. So that while we may not agree with the particular rather narrow pragmatic view of education that Dewey advocates, it still illustrates the basic point I am making that learning to have educational value must be seen to change the person qua person.

Now this does not mean that the content of what he learns is in itself unimportant. The person's consciousness is dependent on the social world in which he lives. What he comes to learn and what is available to him will always be relevant and important issues in education. But they are questions to do with aims of education.

### iii EDUCATION AS UPBRINGING

In holding the above view I am not suggesting that only persons can be educated. In fact it would seem to me that Professor Peters' latest account (16) stops too short in suggesting that education has to be over



and above what is necessary to become a person. For surely an essential part, if only a part, of our understanding of education is that it is concerned with the upbringing of the young and the very young. As the human baby is not born a person and as he does not become one simply through a process of maturation or natural development but by learning, education must also be concerned as G. Langford believes during that stage of becoming a person (17). But G. Langford goes too far in suggesting that education is to become a person for clearly learning can go on for long after someone can fulfil the criteria of what it is to be a person (hence we have higher and adult education). The reason why it is so appropriate to talk of the child's education is because, on the basis of the definition of education I have just put forward, it can be said: firstly, the learning he achieves from the very beginning has a transforming effect on him, and secondly, that this is achieved through the realisation of those capacities which may be said to define the person.

Although it may be argued that until the child gains a degree of conceptual understanding and begins to formulate attitudes and relationships to others he cannot even begin to have the consciousness that is distinctive of being a person, let alone an educated one, still, the learning he achieves in becoming a person can be said to be changing his awareness of the world, the beliefs and values he holds, the expectations he has; indeed the process is more marked in the child growing up than in the maturing adult. The impact of learning is far greater when our knowledge is slight, our beliefs unformed, our attitudes changeable and our own values as yet unknown. Furthermore, while the learning which the child gains may be different in kind from that of the older person it still involves the realization of the same human capacities. The child cannot begin to formulate concepts, think logically, solve problems if he has no potential capacity for rational thought, or to have aesthetic or moral values if he is unable to appreciate beauty or to care for others.

It is for these reasons then that learning as one becomes a person is also, like learning when one is a person a prima facie case of education. In saying this I am not suggesting that children are not as yet in some sense already persons or that there comes a time when the learning a child achieves enables us to say, 'now he fulfils the criteria of what it is to be a person', clearly the process is not like this. Infants become



persons because they are treated as such. In any case it is impossible to draw a hard and fast line between becoming a person and being a person, and no doubt we consider even in the case of adults that some fulfil the criteria better than others (and indeed for that matter that some children fulfil them better than some adults) (18).

Finally, it may help to consider why we do in general usage make a distinction between the person and the 'educated' person, where being educated is very much a question of having those characteristics that, for example, Peters has described in his analysis of the 'educated man'. To answer this we have to take into account that the distinction only occurs in a society which has reached a certain level of sophistication in terms of its industry, technology, scientific knowledge and culture. As a society becomes more industrially and scientifically developed the knowledge that is available becomes extensive, highly complex, and increasingly differentiated into numerous separate branches of inquiry. These are often identified by their own conceptual framework which may have little bearing on the concepts employed in man's everyday understanding of the world. The child born into such a society is presented with a world which is potentially a lot more complicated than it would have been for the average man in the past or for those living now in a so called primitive society. Even if he is extremely talented he will find it impossible to gain a complete conceptual understanding of the world and extremely difficult to gain an understanding that could even be considered at all significant. However, there will clearly be some persons who are more successful than others. Those who we consider to be successful will have come up to a certain recognised standard in the level, extent and differentiation of their knowledge and in their mastery of various forms of inquiry and understanding. In these forms of achievement we will recognise the so called 'educated' man so that what we mean here when we describe someone as 'educated' is that he is highly educated and where the difference between him and 'uneducated' persons may not simply be one of degree. But the fact that the educated person, as used in this sense, comes up to a certain standard does not mean that other persons do not come up to any standard at all or that it is inappropriate to talk of what they are learning as education. If we start to legislate on what, can, and what, cannot count as education in terms of content of learning or the quality of its subject matter we have



entered the area of debating and justifying educational aims.

### iv SUMMARY

In this chapter I have argued that:

- (1) before trying to put forward my own contestable definition of education, I must first be clear on what constitutes the underlying conditions of education, on which there must necessarily be universal agreement;
- (2) to suggest education must at least denote learning is fundamentally right, although this will depend on the concept of learning being adhered to;
- (3) to say that learning is an 'achievement' or a 'successful' performance only implies that it comes up to a mark or is correct, it does not in itself show that it is of educational value or any value at all for that matter;
- (4) learning to count as education must be given a social content, only then will it be possible to eliminate what is trivial, immoral and incoherent. This means the question of whether learning has educational value or not, must largely be a socially relative one. But not entirely, for it is possible to argue that there are certain social values which are universally recognised, at least to a degree, for example, to do with knowledge and truth and what is rationally defensible. In support of this, it may be possible to argue as J.White has done that, generally, learning in itself logically pre-supposes values to do with knowledge, truth and correctness;
- (5) but learning is a process as well as an achievement and how the 'achievement' is arrived at also helps to determine whether in fact it was the result of learning. The answer to this will depend on one's viewpoint as a psychologist, neurologist, philosopher or layman;



- (6) but if learning can be said to have educational value only the concept of learning which presupposes the agency of the person can be applicable. This is because underlying the concept of education is the concept of the person and this also means that once again, judging whether learning is of educational value will not only be based on socially relative criteria, at least to the extent that the characteristics of the person hold universally; rather if learning is to be appropriate, being a person it must :-
- (a) be the result of the person's conscious experience;
  - (b) be characterised as a human activity and not simply a causal process;
  - (c) have a transforming effect: in that it changes the person qua person: by the difference it makes to him in terms of his conceptual awareness, the evaluation he makes, the attitudes he holds and so on;
- (7) it follows from the last criterion that learning to count as education must on logical, and not simply on empirical grounds, necessitate the realisation of those capacities that define the person, i.e. as a self-determining agent and as a centre of experience. On this basis I would suggest that education is concerned with: learning which promotes the development of the person qua person.
- (8) As the learning achieved by those who may be better described as becoming persons also fulfils the above criteria, education can also be to do with the upbringing of children as well as with what adults learn.
- (9) The fact that we distinguish between the educated and the non-educated person does not mean it is inappropriate to refer to the education of the latter, for the meaning of the educated person in this sense is highly stipulative.

At this stage, even if it is accepted that education must be concerned with learning which is appropriate to being a person (in the ways that were briefly suggested) objections will still be raised to the overall idea of education being concerned with learning which promotes the development of the person qua person. This is because it has now become a contestable



definition, which, in the first instance, presupposes that there is agreement on what it is to be a person, the concept of development and the actual notion of the development of the person.. When the first raises considerable and controversial questions, not only of a conceptual but also of a metaphysical kind, and when the last two have been much criticised by philosophers as being vacuous, inappropriate and even positively misleading when used in relation to education. Clearly it is now time to justify the definition I have given by :-

- (1) analysing the concept of the person;
- (2) analysing the concept of development and showing it can be used informatively and usefully in relation to education;
- (3) examining the meaning of education as-'learning which promotes the development of the person qua person';
- (4) defending it as a necessary truth of education and the values it champions against those advocated by other contestable definitions.

I shall therefore devote the rest of part one to an analysis of the concept of the person, then in part two, after an examination of the concept of development, I shall explain and defend the definition of education that I have given as-'learning which promotes the development of the person qua person'.

#### FOOTNOTES

- 1 R.S. Peters, 'Democratic Values and Educational Aims', in Teachers College Record (Feb. 1979) Vol. 80 no.3, p.465.
- 2 Ibid., p.465.
- 3 J. White, 'Learning', in Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Vol. XLVI (1972).
- 4 Ibid., p.45.



- 5 P. Winch, 'Nature and Convention', in Ethics and Action, (London; Routledge and Kegan Paul 1972).
- 6 See P. Hirst, 'What is Teaching?', in The Philosophy of Education, ed. R.S. Peters, (Oxford University Press 1973).
- 7 R. Borger and E.M. Seabourne, The Psychology of Learning, (Penguin Books Ltd. 1966) p.14.
- 8 D.W. Hamlyn, Experience and the Growth of Understanding, (London; Routledge and Kegan Paul 1978) Chapter 6.
- 9 B.R. Bugelski, The Psychology of Learning Applied to Teaching, (The Bobbs, Merrill Colne New York 1971) p.280.
- 10 D.W. Hamlyn, 'Human Learning', in The Concept of Education, ed. R.S. Peters, (London: Oxford University Press 1973) p.180.
- 11 J. White, op. cit., p.48.
- 12 G. Langford, Philosophy and Education, (Macmillan Education Ltd. 1968) Chapter 6.
- 13 J. White, op. cit., p.43.
- 14 This should be seen separately from changes which are due to personality factors rather than to a process of learning.
- 15 J. Dewey, Experience and Education, (Collier 1963), Chapter 3.
- 16 See article by Peters already referred to above.
- 17 G. Langford, Philosophy and Education, (Macmillan 1968), Chapter 5.
- 18 What these criteria are will become apparent in the next four chapters.



**CHAPTER THREE: THE CONCEPT OF THE PERSON**

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### CHAPTER THREE : THE CONCEPT OF THE PERSON

It seems somewhat presumptuous to try and analyse the concept of the person when philosophers have been wrestling with the problem since the time of Plato and especially when it is being done en route to something else. But of course it is just because philosophers have been bothered by the nature of the person that I am able to attempt the task at all; for although philosophers have been at variance with each other in what they have said, I would still hold they have succeeded in enriching and illuminating our understanding of what it is to be a person.

#### i DUALISM

Considering that philosophers are themselves persons it is not surprising that they initially looked inward on themselves in trying to discover the true ultimate human self. Descartes, following in the tradition of Plato, and using a particular philosophical method of systematic doubts is able to arrive at his 'cogito ergo sum' (1) as the one truth he could be sure of (for even his doubting proved his existence). From this maxim Descartes is able to conclude that the mind can exist separately from the body and is therefore essentially a thinking substance. It distinguishes us from animals and machines and guarantees us immortality; and in spite of all that philosophers have said since, it is a belief that people still hold today and which conditions their attitude to each other, gives evidence for the existence of ghosts, and confirms their belief in the mind being able to leave the body whether temporarily or finally at death, in extra sensory perception and in reincarnation.

It is not necessary to examine in any detail Descartes theory of interactionism and its attendant problems to show that the dualist's position is untenable, we have only to ask as P. Geach does (2), to what does the 'I' refer, in 'cogito ergo sum' to see that for Descartes the answer lies



in the use of a private language. As Descartes doubted the existence of everything else, except his own thinking (whether other things, persons, even his own body) then he could only conceive of the 'I' as being exclusively mental; because his doubting made all knowledge suspect, except his own existence, he thought it impossible that he could be mistaken and that when consciousness was present what he asserted must be true. But as Wittgenstein so successfully argued a private language is logically impossible, (3) because language implies rules, which in turn implies public checks (memory being private will not suffice). The way in which Descartes used the 'I' in 'cogito ergo sum' can not be publicly checked and therefore the self to which it refers is meaningless.

## ii HUME'S 'BUNDLE' THEORY

The mistake in starting from subjective experience was dimly appreciated by Hume, who, when looking inwardly was able to conclude that he could not perceive the self at all, hence, that frequently quoted passage:

'for my part when I enter most intimately into what I call myself I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure, I never catch myself at any time without a perception and can never observe anything but the perception' (4).

But although Hume refuted Descartes' idea of the immaterial self he was still left with the problem of deciding what the self did actually refer to. Instead of looking elsewhere for a solution he made the same mistake as Descartes and continued to rely on introspection, consequently as an empiricist he could only conclude that the self was no more than a series of successive states of consciousness or bundle of perceptions. This inevitably left him with the problem of explaining what gave unity to each bundle and how one could be distinguished from another. Hume knew these questions had to be answered but failed to do so satisfactorily even to himself. What Hume suggested was that the idea we have of the



self is based on the way we actually experience our perceptions as a successive chain, related through memory and causation. But, as an explanation this falls down on several counts:-

- (1) the idea of self is already presupposed in being able to relate a series of perceptions, otherwise how do I know the perceptions are mine?
- (2) if a person is no more than a bundle of perceptions then criteria have still to be given which would distinguish one bundle from another;
- (3) memory cannot provide the answer to (1) or (2) because :-
  - (a) it evokes a circular argument (remembering an experience implies thinking of it as one's own),
  - (b) if certain experiences could not be remembered the person could not be said to have had them,
  - (c) it involves an infinite regress because each and every experience has to be remembered.

Although Hume may have dispensed with the idea of the self as an immaterial substance, he is as guilty as Descartes in relying on a private explanation, and in failing to take into account physical and behavioural criteria and the relation a person has to others. It turns out to be just as impossible to identify the self as a bundle of perceptions as it is to identify a consciousness that has no physical reference.

### iii LOGICAL BEHAVIOURISM

It was not until recently that philosophers realised that our understanding of what it is to be a person cannot be ascertained through introspection or by giving priority to one's own case for this must always lead to a dualistic conception of the person and to what Ryle termed the 'ghost in the machine'. Following in Wittgenstein's footsteps Ryle was able to explode the myth, by showing the distinction drawn between mind and



body to be a false one; and that the difficulties of explaining the privacy and intimacy of our mental life and how thinking which is essentially a mental phenomenon can bring about physical changes, can all be made to disappear once it is appreciated that mental terms and physical terms constitute different logical types. He argued that the concepts traditionally associated with qualities of mind:- will, beliefs, self knowledge, feeling etc., need not pose any special difficulties for us, because in using them we are not referring to some inner private mental occurrence which results in overt actions, but to the overt actions themselves:

'The boxer, the surgeon, the poet and the salesman apply their special criteria in the performance of their special tasks, for they are trying to get things right, and they are appraised as clever, skilful, inspired or shrewd not for the ways in which they consider, if they consider at all presumptions for conducting their special performances but for the way in which they conduct the performance themselves' (5).

On Ryle's account, then, behavioural criteria are sufficient for the use of mental concepts. We judge a person's character not by trying to read his mind, but by assessing his behaviour or dispositions to behave. Whether or not a person thinks intelligently, accurately, imaginatively, intuitively or whatever, does not depend on whether he is thinking silently to himself or out loud but whether it comes up to agreed public standards.

Clearly Ryle is largely right, in so far as the meaning of many of our so called mental concepts do depend on behavioural criteria. But in exploding the myth of the ghost in the machine, while Ryle made a considerable contribution to the search for an understanding of the person, he stopped short of completing that understanding. For the mystery remains, however much a person's life can be explained in terms of his behaviour or dispositions to behave this does not explain consciousness: the experience the person has of the private world of his own, comprising his own thoughts, feelings, and intentions, a world which does not disappear simply because it is parasitic and secondary to a public world of meaning and action.



#### iv IDENTITY THEORY/MATERIALISM

There have been several attempts to explain the belief in our own consciousness, for example psychoparallelism, epiphenomenalism and the identity theory. Each theory has problems of its own, the first two because they presuppose a dualistic conception of man which has already been shown to be untenable and the last because it reduces consciousness to little more than a series of electro-chemical impulses and self awareness to a form of one part of the brain scanning another. It therefore fails to do justice to the concept of the person we already have. However, the identity theory does have the advantage of being compatible with logical behaviourism and therefore needs considering further.

Philosophers like Armstrong (6) have argued that while Ryle is correct in the way he explains the meaning of mental concepts, this still leaves it quite open as to what the mind actually is. Armstrong says, the weakness of behaviourism lies in its inability to show what is happening when there is no outward behaviour but the mind is active (thinking, dreaming, feeling or whatever) and to explain, why, when outward behaviour is present, it is often seen as the effect or result of the mental state and not simply as a logical expression of it. He says, the problem is only partly solved by the notion of a disposition to behave because this fails to show what actually causes a person to behave or not to behave in the way he does. It is with the logical possibilities of giving a causal explanation of behaviour and therefore of the mind that the identity theory is concerned.

But while the identity theory may be compatible with logical behaviourism, one can still accept the main arguments behind the latter without being committed to the former. This is because Ryle's thesis is a logical one, he is not saying the mind is behaviour (as the materialist might say mental states are brain states) that is, he is not identifying the mind in any substantive sense with behaviour, rather he is showing that in common discourse behavioural criteria are logically sufficient for the use of mental concepts and if a private language is logically impossible he



must in some sense be fundamentally right. But with regard to any causal description which would explain what enables us to have a mind, logical behaviourism can remain quite neutral and indeed for that matter quite disinterested.

The identity theorist of course accepts that the logic of mental concepts will be different from that of physical ones but what he is anxious to show is that while the logic of 'a' statements may differ from those of 'b' this does not entail that 'a's' are anything over and above 'b's'. But this means he has to find a way of explaining the identity of mental states and brain states without confusing the two different types of logical predicate, so that when Armstrong suggests that 'logical behaviourism' 'leaves it quite open as to what the mind actually "is"' he must be using the "is" in a compositional and not a definitional sense.

But at this point all the problems begin, for the idea of contingent identity may get round the problems of Leibniz law but only it seems to me if restricted to physical phenomena. It makes perfectly good sense to say this table is an old packing case and nothing else or the evening star is the morning star or fleecy textured clouds are in fact water particles, or lightning is an electrical discharge, because, in each case these are different expressions which can be seen to refer to the same thing, and this is because each one has a physical existence which stands independently of the ways in which it is described (7). But this is the only way the identity theory makes any sense, for when it is applied to persons we find that mental statements and brain statements are not referring to the same thing at all, because there is nothing which stands independently of the two classes of statement, but to which they both refer. For example, to describe my dream is not to describe a brain state as describing something as an old packing case is to describe a table. In the case of brain states and mental states all that we could identify in the way required would be the physical process of the brain. But we do not have two different logical descriptions of this, but only one, for while brain statements may be said to refer to it, mental statements (concerning thoughts, feelings, intentions and so on) do not, rather they refer to a way of life characterised by human



actions and purposes. It is because the logic of the respective statements differs in the way it does, it never could apply to the same thing, regardless of what empirical discoveries were made, any more than the aesthetic properties of a poem could ever be said to refer to the ink in which it was written.

The only way a materialist's conception of the mind could be preserved would therefore be by radically altering the logic of mental concepts. Some materialists do see this as a possibility and suggest that once certain empirical discoveries are made those concepts which imply consciousness will necessarily change. Instead of talking about thoughts, intentions, emotions and purposes we will be talking about brain processes, dispositions to behave, stimulus-response behaviour and so on. The identity theory will then be perfectly meaningful - mental states will be brain states. The need for education would disappear, for while human beings could still be said to have a 'mental life' - to make calculations, to have a memory, to respond behaviourally at least to the extent certain animals and machines do, any alterations needed on the human organism's behavioural patterns could be achieved through a process of programming or conditioning on the lines B.F. Skinner (8) has suggested. But the materialist would be wrong if he thought he had succeeded in explaining our concept of the person; for clearly in a world of only biological machines, persons would simply not exist and the world that they once inhabited would not exist either; because it is a world, which at least so far, has been based on inter-personal achievement, common purposes and shared experiences. This journey into the future does not illuminate our concept of the person it destroys it.

#### v    STRAWSON'S CONCEPT OF THE PERSON

We have at this stage reached something of an impasse, if dualism is logically absurd and if materialism fails to do justice to the picture we already have of what it is to be a person, how can we



explain the concept? Is there a way of at least analysing it, making use of contemporary methods of philosophy without commitment to either side? P.F. Strawson (9) has attempted just such a task and although it has come in for a lot of criticism, it does have the merit of explaining our understanding of the person as it is presupposed in our language without recourse to dualism or materialism. But it is not simply an analysis for it also serves to solve some metaphysical problems, notably the existence of other minds.

Strawson defends the view that the concept of the person is logically primitive and therefore unanalysable into other concepts (like the mind and body). The idea of dualism therefore presupposes a prior understanding of what it is to be a person and so this means that the idea of individual consciousness can not exist as a primary concept. But this does not leave Strawson to defend a materialistic position, for, he says, it is characteristic of our concept of the person, that not only are 'm' predicates, predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics applicable to it, but also 'p' predicates that is, predicates ascribing states of consciousness. He says the reason why we want to distinguish between statements to do with physical characteristics on the one hand, and those to do with mental attributes on the other, (in that one can never be logically equivalent to another) and why at the same time we wish to apply both kinds of statements not to two subjects but to one, can only be explained when we realise the logical primitiveness of the concept of a person.

Once we have reached this stage other problems which existed for us simply disappear. For example, on Strawson's account the argument from analogy should never get started, for the person who uses it relies on the notion of consciousness as a primary one and on this basis he defines and identifies himself, (if he does not do it on this basis, if he uses behavioural criteria then he has no need for the argument from analogy). But according to Strawson the very idea of my own consciousness already presupposes



the concept of the person. It therefore only makes sense for me to talk of my experiences in contradistinction to those of other people. If the experiences were only mine, then, they would be no ones.

But if we do not identify the person on the basis of introspection and then by the argument from analogy, how do we identify those subjects to which both 'm' and 'p' predicates are applicable? Now Strawson's thesis is a logical one: individuals of a particular type must be described in the same way. He says it is therefore 'a necessary condition of one's ascribing states of consciousness in the way one does, that one should also ascribe them or be prepared to ascribe them to others who are not oneself (10). This means we must be able to identify other subjects of experience. The question of identification is therefore a crucial one, and is the one that has led to most controversy. Strawson holds that when we ascribe states of consciousness to others, that is, when we identify others as persons, we do so on the strength of their behaviour, not because it is seen as a sign but because behavioural criteria must in some sense be of a 'logically adequate kind' (11); but when we ascribe states of consciousness to ourselves we do so on the basis other than that of behaviour. Now, when individual consciousness was seen as a primary concept it was exactly this distinction which was the source of all the problems concerning the existence of other minds, but on Strawson's account this is no longer the case; rather it shows the special nature of 'p' predicates, that they have both first and third ascriptive uses. It is not that these predicates have two kinds of meaning (one public and the other private) rather there is a single meaning, but two ways of ascribing them. But, according to other philosophers, it is precisely these two ways of ascribing 'p' predicates (that does not rely on the argument from analogy) which puts Strawson's account into serious difficulty.

A.J. Ayer, (12) argues that although human behaviour can in itself be seen as expressive of consciousness this does not necessarily imply that behaviour provides a logically adequate



criterion. He says however intimate the relationship is, there is still a difference between the sign and what it signifies. For example there would be no contradiction in identifying a man's grimace as one that was characteristic of a man in pain and at the same denying he was in pain. He therefore considers Strawson's analogy of a game of cards to be inappropriate: 'the grimace and the feeling are logically separable in a way that, given the appropriate conventions the appearance and function of a token in a game, are not' (13). Although Ayer accepts Alston's point, that there must be a logical connection between the inner state and its outward expression which generally holds, he still concludes that once the understanding of mental concepts has been acquired, they can still be divorced from their original association with behaviour. Indeed, Ayer takes this a stage further and suggests that in the case of identifying the person, once we have the concept, there is no reason why we should continue to successfully ascribe experiences to others for it could be, unknown to us, that no other persons actually exist (e.g. they have all been replaced by human looking automata). This would mean that Strawson would be wrong in maintaining that before I could ascribe experiences to myself I must first ascribe them to others. It would be quite possible for me to be mistaken in ascribing them to others but not apparently in my own case (although how would I know I hadn't become a human looking automaton). Ayer says there is a difference between my believing that I am justified in accepting a given proposition and my really being so. Strawson has therefore to show not only that we are prepared to ascribe states of consciousness to others but that we are actually successful in doing so.

But this is surely to go too far; certainly we can not be said to have a concept of a person unless we can identify him, in ascribing any kind of predicate we have to know what we are talking about, but this does not mean we have to know whether what we are talking about is true. Although for Ayer meaning does seem to rest on verification, the relationship is surely the other way round.



We can only verify (whether a person exists) what we already understand (what it is to be a person). There may be no empirical contradiction in saying a man looked as if he was in pain, but he was not, (just as there is no empirical contradiction in saying that in a particular card game the Queen of Hearts was used as a card without honours), but there would certainly be a logical one. Pain behaviour (and other forms of behaviour) do not only act as signs they also provide logical criteria. Confusion arises when the two become muddled. A doctor may well use pain behaviour as a symptom in diagnosing a complaint or given other information he may well discount pain behaviour as being indicative of it. But in order to do this at all he must already have a concept of pain where behaviour provides 'logically adequate criteria' and is not simply understood as a sign. If it was, then in order to have a concept of pain he would have to know what the sign was signifying, what it was referring to, but how could this be identified on its own when it has no public check?

I would conclude that to have a concept of a person, we only have to know how to apply both aspects of 'p' predicates correctly and on this basis we can identify the person. We do not have to know if what we say is true or not. Indeed we could be mistaken in our own case as well as in that of others. We can believe ourselves to be in severe pain and later realise we are suffering no more than a dull ache, and some persons believe they possess some other kind of identity to that of personhood, like Nina in Tchekov's *Seagull*.

However, further objections have to be faced for Strawson himself has been criticised for confusing questions of meaning with those of verification. Hamlyn, for example, suggests that Strawson explains the meaning of 'p' predicates in terms of ways of ascribing those predicates. And Don Locke (14) argues that Strawson hopes to show that we can not ascribe conscious states to anything unless we have some logically adequate way of telling that our ascriptions of conscious states to others are correct.



But that, because he fails to distinguish telling in the sense of identifying and telling in the sense of verifying, his argument is a complete muddle (15).

However, I cannot, for myself, see that these criticisms of Strawson are justified. Certainly, having a concept of the person (understanding what it means) entails an ascriptive use, and therefore to have a concept of a person we have to be both other ascriber (on the basis of behaviour) and self ascriber (on a basis other than that of behaviour); but this ascriptive use is part of the logic of 'p' predicates and does not necessarily imply a process of verification. We can use 'p' predicates correctly without wondering how we could verify them, although if we were to wonder, on logical grounds an argument from analogy would certainly be ruled out. Although Strawson makes a distinction between meaning and ascriptive use, both are still within the business of conceptual analysis; for in this case, understanding a concept implies knowing how to use it (in these two distinctive modes), in the same way that having a concept of the Queen of Hearts implies more than recognising its markings for one has to also appreciate how it functions within a game. But the fact that we ascribe the concept on different grounds, depending on whether we are talking about ourselves or others is not because 'p' predicates have two separate meanings (e.g. criteria applicable to private consciousness and behavioural criteria), but rather as Strawson argues, 'because it is essential to the single (my italics) kind of meaning that they do have, that both ways of ascribing them should be perfectly in order' (16).

But it is perhaps because we have these two ascriptive uses that it has been thought appropriate to speak of two distinctive meanings. Strawson gives the example of depression where describing someone behaving in a depressed way is thought to mean something different than describing ourselves as feeling depressed, 'One is inclined to argue that feelings can be felt but not observed and behaviour can be observed but not felt and that therefore there must be



room to drive a logical wedge. But the concept of depression spans the place where one wants to drive it' (17). This must surely mean that in order to have a concept of consciousness (thoughts, feeling states intentions), one has to be a subject of consciousness as well as an observer of others; but this does not mean (for the reasons Strawson has given) that we come to understand consciousness from our own case. To understand 'p' predicates, or many of them, we have to already possess a concept of a person, but this also entails being a subject of consciousness and sharing a common human nature.

This very last point is perhaps not developed sufficiently in Strawson's analysis of 'p' predicates. B.A.O. Williams (18) with some justification, remarks that as Strawson has defined them, 'p' as well as 'm' predicates are ascribable to animals. He argues that Strawson did not see this because, like Descartes, he fails to relate persons to other living things and therefore maintains an artificial dichotomy between persons and everything else. Unless Strawson is going to widen his concept of the person to include animals, then, according to Williams we will have to accept that the concept is not after all unique in admitting the joint ascription of the two kinds of predicate. Although obviously it still is unique in the way predicates are actually ascribed, if William's point is a valid one then there must be other concepts (or at least one), which is primitive in the same kind of way.

However, while Strawson's analysis takes insufficient account that the concept at least of human being, falls under a class of living things in general, it is surely right in its specification of the distinctive nature of the human being as a person. If it fails, it fails because it makes too few distinctions. For in showing the nature of 'p' predicates it is not enough to show how they differ from 'm' predicates, what is also required is that they are distinguished from the description of other living things, but which would not be classed as persons. It is not enough to say that predicates imply consciousness, for clearly in a straight forward sense animals are conscious too. However, if I have understood Strawson



correctly the special nature of 'p' predicates is not simply that they imply consciousness, but that they imply a particular kind of consciousness, namely that which is intentional and the content of which is publicly shared. Consciousness as a notion is only intelligible if there is some understanding of what stands as its object (to be conscious we have to be conscious of something) it is surely what persons are conscious of and not consciousness per se, that makes 'p' predicates identifiable and uniquely applicable to persons. It is therefore only to the extent that animals are conscious, in the same way as persons and therefore could be said, to share the same world, that 'p' predicates can be said to be applicable to them. Both dogs and persons can be described as having their dinner, enjoying the sun, going for a walk, getting upset, but to show dogs were engaged in the same activities there would have to be some evidence that they were conscious of what they were doing in a similar way. Clearly what makes it unlikely is that the person is a language user, he has a different conceptual understanding to animals and is therefore conscious of the simplest activities (including the situations and feelings which give rise to them) in a totally different way.

The distinctive nature of 'p' predicates is clearly crucial to our understanding of the person and this needs to be considered further. It is therefore perhaps time to part company with Strawson, for while his analysis has enabled us to understand the logic of the concept it does not tell us what the person is actually like - what characterises him, in what ways does his consciousness differ from that of animals? What is peculiar to the human nature that he shares with others? In short what can be said about the actual content of 'p' predicates, that will explain not only the character of the person but why he is valued so highly, to the extent of being held worthy of respect and the belief for some, that if he lives his life aright that he will be blessed at the end with immortality.



vi THE ESSENTIAL NATURE OF 'P' PREDICATES

In answer to this, it is not difficult to empty out a rag bag of attributes that provide the subject matter of 'p' predicates. Above all, they would indicate that a person can initiate action, that he has intentions and purposes, based on his capacity for thought, memory and the evaluation of his desires. Furthermore, that the quality of these capacities, the degree to which these are exercised, are a result of the life he shares with others, through his ability to communicate and to use language. But they are also due to his curiosity about the world he lives in and his constructiveness in the world he creates; for these have led to the search for knowledge and to the continual striving to create and preserve a civilisation he could be proud of. The achievements of human civilisation show that the person is not simply characterised as a rational being, but that he is also a creature of feeling, capable of caring for others, of appreciating goodness and beauty, of enjoying a mental and emotional life, which is both imaginative and sensitive. The person can be respected, regardless of whether he possesses all these attributes, simply on the strength of being a self-initiating agent living in a human world. But this also carries with it a burden of responsibility for it means he is accountable for his actions not only as a rational agent but also as a social one and therefore as a moral being.

The person, then, could be described as having a whole range of capacities, without which education as a concept would simply be unintelligible to us. But while they may provide the subject matter of 'p' predicates, they do not all define the person. It would no doubt be argued that some persons are characterised by their destructiveness, lack of imagination, their irrationality, cruelty to others, and so on. It is clearly important to distinguish between those characteristics which do, and those which do not, define the life of anyone deemed to be a 'person'. There is a difference between what a person could or should be, and what a person necessarily is.



What then are these characteristics which enable us to identify the person, to distinguish him, for example, from a machine.

A machine can be credited with a certain 'mental life' : 'holding' concepts, making calculations, acquiring knowledge, upholding values of accuracy, truth and consistency, but it cannot be said to be experiencing what it is doing, or if we think it can, we are starting to identify it as a person. We distinguish the person from the machine by virtue of his self awareness or self consciousness, and this includes consciousness of the world he lives in as well as consciousness of himself. But it is the idea of self awareness which is crucial, because the notion of consciousness could not get along without it. Consciousness suggests not only an objective world that the person can be conscious of, but an awareness of that objective world, which implies a subjective point of view and a personal experience of that point of view. This is why, the concept of the person is dependent on us being both self ascriber and other ascriber, and why it entails understanding the concept from the inside and not simply from the position of an observer.

But the person is also distinguishable from the machine because he is self motivating or determining. The person behaves and acts without having to be 'switched on'. This is why we attribute wants and desires to a person, in a way we would not consider doing if we were explaining the behaviour of a machine. It is only because the person is self determining, that it can make any sense to refer to the person being an agent, capable of initiating actions, making evaluations and having reasons for what he does that are in an important sense his own.

The ideas of consciousness and self motivation have also biological meanings and some philosophers like Paul Ziff (19) have argued that consciousness could never be attributed to a machine for the very obvious reason that it is not a living thing. Although this does not take us very far, for consciousness is only definitive of the person, if defined in social and not simply in natural terms,



nonetheless, the relationship between being conscious and being alive does seem to be more than a contingent one.

To say that the person is characterised in these ways may serve to distinguish the person from the machine, but the account given, so far, is still open to the objection that Williams makes, that if 'p' predicates only suggest consciousness, which is not qualified in any way, they can apply equally well to animals as they do to human beings. To answer this one I would now like to put forward and defend the following criteria as being crucial to our understanding of 'p' predicates :-

- (1) the person is a centre of human experience, where 'human' gives a social rather than a physiological explanation;
- (2) the person is a rational agent where 'rationality' presupposes the capacity for evaluation and linguistic understanding and not only purposeful behaviour;
- (3) the person is a moral agent where the meaning of moral may have different interpretations some of which are dependent on more than formal criteria.

These will now be looked at in turn and will provide the subject matter for the next three chapters.



## FOOTNOTES

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- 10 Ibid., p.106.
- 11 Ibid., p.106.
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- 13 Ibid., pp. 98-99.



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- 15 Ibid., p.144.
- 16 P.F. Strawson, op. cit., p.110.
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CHAPTER FOUR: THE PERSON AS A CENTRE  
OF EXPERIENCE

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#### CHAPTER FOUR: THE PERSON AS A CENTRE OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE

The person is identified qua person, not simply on the grounds that he can be said to be conscious or a centre of experience, but because of what is characteristic of that experience, in being conceptually structured and affectively sensitized. But even this, it may be argued, is not sufficient to distinguish the person from the animal, because both may be said to hold concepts and to have feelings. What turns out to be crucial, is the nature of a person's conceptual understanding and emotional experiences. It is only when these reflect a way of life, characterised by human beliefs, values and interpersonal agreement of meaning, that consciousness can be said to identify the person. As I suggested in the previous chapter, consciousness or experience of the animal differs from that of the person, because of what it experiences and because of what it is conscious of. Only by the extent to which the animal could be said to share the same world as human beings, that is, a world characterised by human activities, values and purposes, could its consciousness be said to be comparable or similar to that of persons. Attempts have been made to initiate animals into human society, not only peripherally in the way domestic pets are encouraged to 'join in' family life, but in the real sense of trying to get them to understand human activities under the same description that human beings would use. This of course is only possible through the use of language which at the present time would make it empirically impossible. Although some remarkable work has been done in getting apes to communicate symbolically through sign language, this still remains at a very limited level.(1). However, there are certainly no logical reasons why an animal should not learn to become a person. For as M. Midgley forcibly argues we are animals too (2).

The person, then, can only be identified as a centre of experience because of the nature of that experience which can be said to be both (i.) conceptually structured and (ii) affectively sensitized. These will now be looked at in turn.



# i A PERSON'S EXPERIENCES ARE CONCEPTUALLY STRUCTURED

As a biological organism the experience available to the person is dependent on sense perception; without the possession of sensory organs the outside world would simply be inaccessible to him, but as a social being they are dependent on the conceptual understanding that enables him to actually make sense of his perceptions. No one realised this more than Immanuel Kant whose famous maxim 'thoughts without content are empty intuitions without concepts are blind', is particularly appropriate here. Although Kant's main concern was with the nature of a priori judgments what he says still has implications for synthetic concepts, because, like a priori concepts, they are also principles of unity, which provide a rule or rules, for the unification of a particular set of sensible data. 'All knowledge' he says, 'demands a concept, though the concept may indeed be quite imperfect or insecure. But a concept is always as regards its form something universal, which serves as a rule' (3). The distinction between intuition and conception is a crucial one. Conceptual knowledge may come through experience but can not be derived from it. Furthermore, the conceptual understanding we gain is not a series of unrelated facts or ideas. Concepts at one level for example will logically presuppose concepts at a lower level. Conceptual learning is therefore structured and so in learning any new concept, we can only make sense of it if we can place it within an existing conceptual framework. In this way with the help of the imagination our experiences become synthesised.

Unfortunately, psychologists engaged in empirical research into cognitive development have not always appreciated the logical nature of man's conceptual understanding. Associationists, (4) for example, in identifying thinking as a series of thoughts, where one experience triggers off the next by a process of association (due to contiguity, continuity of attention, frequency and similarity, related ideas occurring together etc.) failed to realise, that thinking based on an association of ideas, already depends on a prior understanding of concepts, which are general and not particular in nature, and that therefore their theory failed to explain learning. Associationism has



now been rejected, but abstractionism which is still widely accepted by psychologists, faces just as many logical difficulties because it is based on the erroneous assumption that concepts can be derived from sense experiences (5). But there are exceptions, G.F. Stout, for example criticised associationism on the grounds that it failed to recognise the 'form' of thinking as distinct from the 'psychical' element. In *A Manual of Psychology*, he says, 'the presented whole is for the associationists simply the sum of its presented components'; but he maintained that mental elements will change in entering into new combinations (6). There is a clear similarity here between his work and gestalt psychology.

More recently J. Piaget's work has fallen very much within the Kantian tradition. In his explanation of cognitive development he recognises that the child has to pass through certain logical stages, (7) that one stage logically presupposes earlier stages (for example thinking autonomously presupposes conforming to rules) and that in this way the child's ability to think develops. He therefore recognises that experience does not depend simply on sense perception, but is determined by pre-existing knowledge which has its own logical structure and is characterised by public norms.

But Piaget's account is not without its problems, because while he accepts the social nature of learning, he also conceives of the child's cognitive development (particularly in the early stages) in biological terms, and it is because of this that philosophers like T. Mischel and R.S. Peters, while recognising the immense contribution Piaget has made to child psychology, have still found good cause to criticise his work (8). For, while both natural and other forms of development are all normative, the kind of norms involved are essentially different (9). It may be that biological or physiological development is causally necessary for development which involves learning to go on, but the two descriptions must be kept distinct. To describe the latter in terms of the former can only cause confusion, for example the notion of 'accommodation' will have a different meaning if applied to physiological development rather than development through learning; but to muddle the two can only lead to conceptual error and so to empirical misunderstanding as well.



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More recently J. Piaget's work has fallen very much within the Kantian tradition. In his explanation of cognitive development he recognises that the child has to pass through certain logical stages, (7) that one stage logically presupposes earlier stages (for example thinking autonomously presupposes conforming to rules) and that in this way the child's ability to think develops. He therefore recognises that experience does not depend simply on sense perception, but is determined by pre-existing knowledge which has its own logical structure and is characterised by public norms.

But Piaget's account is not without its problems, because while he accepts the social nature of learning, he also conceives of the child's cognitive development (particularly in the early stages) in biological terms, and it is because of this that philosophers like T. Mischel and R.S. Peters, while recognising the immense contribution Piaget has made to child psychology, have still found good cause to criticise his work (8). For, while both natural and other forms of development are all normative, the kind of norms involved are essentially different (9). It may be that biological or physiological development is causally necessary for development which involves learning to go on, but the two descriptions must be kept distinct. To describe the latter in terms of the former can only cause confusion, for example the notion of 'accommodation' will have a different meaning if applied to physiological development rather than development through learning; but to muddle the two can only lead to conceptual error and so to empirical misunderstanding as well.



It could be, that the tendency for psychologists (Piaget is not alone in this) to confuse natural development, with development which is the result of learning, is due to the fact, that both go on at the same time, and because one kind of development enables the other kind to take place. For example, a child learns to talk (end of sensori motor stage) but this is only possible because a certain physiological stage has already been reached (hence the notion of readiness for learning). The capacity to learn can therefore be seen as a result of the physiological development, hence most children learn to talk at roughly the same time. The picture can be potentially even more confusing, when development is not only the result of learning and physiological change, but where the learning is in itself, determined by the logical nature of what the development is in. For while these two can be described in the same terms, because the experience of learning must be logically related to what is being learnt, this can not be the case with a physiological explanation. And it becomes even more important not to confuse the story of natural development with development which is conceptual and achieved through learning. (For further comment on this see chapter seven especially pp.180-182.)

Whatever the difficulties of empirically explaining how a person learns to think and to understand the world he lives in, (and they are considerable (10) ) the philosophical point remains, that it is distinctive of a person that his experiences are conceptually structured and this is only possible through the acquisition of language. It is because of the child's growing conceptual awareness that he begins to formulate beliefs and attitudes and to arrive at a position in which he can both know and understand the world he lives in. It is a position which is an essentially social one, the concepts available to the person being dependent on the society of which he is a member. But this does not commit us to saying that all the beliefs and knowledge which his conceptual understanding allows him to have, are socially relative. Far from it, if education is concerned with the development of persons it must respect the rationality of the person and this means upholding standards of truth and objectivity (see below). To a large extent the common knowledge which the person comes to enjoy as a member

of a social group is 'picked up' rather than being formally and intentionally learnt, but providing it comes up to standards that are publicly recognised, the continuous growth of a person's conceptual experience can still count as learning. In a society, however, in which knowledge is highly advanced and differentiated this would be inadequate, learning would have to be brought about systematically and intentionally through formal teaching.

No doubt, the conceptual distinctions a society makes depend on the unique wants and interests of the members of that particular society. But this is not to say that they can construct a world of meaning in any way they like. It is interesting that in spite of the fact that societies are, and have been, so different, that it is not usually too difficult to translate exact meanings from one language to another. A. Quinton remarks on the comparative ease with which we can translate ancient languages, (11) and if we consider, at the present time, the extent and complexity of what is claimed to be true, there still exists a tremendous body of knowledge which is universally recognised and which does not depend for its validity on where we happen to live (consider for example the universal appeal of an encyclopedia translated into one common language). But having said this it would be wrong to suggest that the development of reason on which the pursuit of knowledge depends can be found to the same extent universally. Our own culture for example is rooted in a critical tradition where there is a concern for truth and a desire to push the frontiers of our knowledge forward. But this is not the case in all societies. Indeed, some societies actually discourage the development of rational inquiry and critical thought (12). Nonetheless, because the extent of our knowledge is now so much greater and the communicable world can be seen to be considerably bigger, agreement that has been reached, is now on a far greater scale than it ever has been in the past. And so it would not seem too outrageous to suggest, that we may at least have got some of our conceptual understanding right, that our cognitive apparatus may be doing a reasonable job in enabling us to get clearer on the nature of reality. Furthermore, this body of universal knowledge is not simply an agglomeration of facts, for it to be meaningful it



must be structured, and it must be seen in terms of its subject matter. This means that if a person is to acquire knowledge to any degree, he must be initiated into different subject areas and he must achieve certain standards of competence and understanding that the subject areas demand.

The ability to learn and to gain knowledge and understanding is not only based on what is objectively 'there' available to us. Knowledge depends on the notion of truth and this as Wittgenstein pointed out is a social concept: it implies agreement. Furthermore language itself, which presupposes the value of truth telling, is a social achievement and is only possible against a background of common interest, wants and purposes in short it depends on understanding and sharing in the same way of life. It is on this basis that agreement can be reached. But the actual possibility of sharing our human predicament, this, in its turn presupposes the potentiality of human beings to communicate and to form relationships with each other and this is also part of our understanding of what it is to be a person.

I have argued that a person's experiences are only meaningful to him because they are conceptually structured. They enable him, on the strength of this, to form beliefs and attitudes and to have certain expectations of the world he lives in. But these will not only be concerned with what a person finds to be true, they will also involve other types of experience, for example, of an aesthetic, religious or moral sort; although the nature of these experiences will depend on a particular social environment they are derived from sources of value common to all societies. But it could not be claimed that there is the same agreement that has been found in the pursuit for knowledge. Different societies and indeed different persons, hold varying aesthetic, religious and moral beliefs. No doubt in each case it is possible to lay down what would count as minimum criteria, otherwise we could not identify the belief or attitude in question, but it would be impossible to give stipulative criteria, that would define content and be recognised as universally valid. However, with the rapid increase in communication between different societies it could be argued that different beliefs are now

more commonly known about and this has led to an appreciation of other cultures and to a gradual emergence of common values, at least of an aesthetic and moral kind if not of a religious kind. As evidence, we have only to consider how much more liberal we have become in our appreciation of the arts or the extent to which the human rights campaign has taken on most of the world. Although there is not the same universality of agreement over aesthetic, religious and moral values as those concerned with knowledge, there must be agreement for the forms of life or modes of experience to be at all meaningful or creditable. Furthermore, an appreciation of these values will also involve initiation, this time, into what could be called distinctive modes of experience, and these too, will have certain standards concerning their mastery and understanding.

To summarise, it can be said that a person is identified because his experiences have been conceptually structured through the acquisition of language and this enables him to have: firstly, a certain knowledge and understanding of the world; and secondly, to hold particular values concerned not only with the pursuit of knowledge but also with the appreciation of aesthetic, religious and moral experiences.

## ii A PERSON'S EXPERIENCES ARE AFFECTIVELY SENSITIZED

### (a) The Concept of Emotion

So far, a person's experiences have been explained largely in conceptual terms because the experiences which are available to him are dependent on the concepts he holds. Even an experience which is largely a matter of sensory perception, (for example an awareness of a bright light), only has the meaning it does because of the description under which it is seen. But, I now wish to suggest, that experience is characterised by being affectively sensitized, as well as conceptually structured, that life is experienced emotionally, and that it is feeling and sensitivity which are as much the mark of the person as his rationality.



The arguments against this kind of distinction are, of course, well known. It can easily be shown that emotions are basically forms of rational appraisal, that distinctions between different emotions can only be made on conceptual grounds and not simply by an appeal to the strength of feeling being experienced.

The attempt to identify emotion with feeling states that can be ascertained physiologically was, for example, the mistake lying behind the James-Lange theory of emotion. This explained emotion as a mass of sensations, defining it as, 'the way the body feels when in a disturbed organic state and when going through expressive and overt movements characteristic of emotions' (14). But the very fact that it was able to show a relationship between the two, meant that it was already dependent on a concept of emotion which could be understood independently from any bodily reference. It has since been argued by psychologists and philosophers alike that the emotions can never be identified simply on the grounds of describing an organic state. R.S. Woodworth, as a psychologist, for example, argues that emotions are only distinguished by context and depend on the person's cognition of a situation and his behavioural response being appropriate to it (15).

And R.S. Peters, as a philosopher, has been especially concerned in showing that emotions are basically forms of cognition, that some kind of appraisal is a logically necessary condition in distinguishing between them (16). For example, a man feels sympathy because he knows and understands the situation another person finds himself in; contempt because of what counts as worthy behaviour and what it means to fall short of it; resentment because of what is recognised as unfair treatment by others and so on. There is therefore plenty of scope for educating the emotions.

Now while I would accept Peters argument that emotion has a cognitive core (on the basis of which different emotions can be distinguished) and that the experience of emotion is therefore dependent on acts of cognition and can not be separated from them, I would still wish to argue, that an appraisal in itself does not enable us to identify an experience as an emotional one. In

emphasizing the conceptual nature of emotion there is a danger that the person's experiences are reduced to acts of cognition. To say that emotions are conceptual, that they are dependent on how we assess a situation, does not commit us to saying that they are only a form of cognitive appraisal. To feel fear is not only to see a situation as harmful, for it is possible to assess a situation in this way without having any feeling of fear at all; furthermore, a man can consider that someone possesses what is rightfully his without feeling jealous; or two persons could be unjustly treated but only one may feel resentment. In these examples the difference lies not so much in the appraisal, but in the feeling being experienced and the question which then immediately poses itself, is how is this to be identified?

By way of providing an answer we could consider that as we are subject to emotion, as it is something that comes over us rather than something that we decide to do, it might be possible to identify feelings either introspectively or by using physiological tests. But there are problems with both of these methods. Firstly, the problem of introspection (which I shall return again to shortly), is that it relies on a method which is essentially private. We can ascertain that people are making the same assessment in a way we can not be sure that they are having the same feeling. There are therefore difficulties of both an epistemological and metaphysical kind in using introspection as a method of identification. Secondly, with physiological tests, here certainly, the evidence is clearly public, so there would be no problem if all that was required was the identification of particular physiological states but this is not all that is required. The psychologist, for example, also needs to have a prior understand of whether, what he is identifying, is in fact an emotional, as well as a physiological state. It could be thought that this would be provided by the appraisal being made. When it is correlated with a certain condition of the autonomic nervous system the person could be said to be undergoing some emotion. But as all appraisals will correlate with some physiological state or other on what grounds could one be described as emotional but not another?



(b) Behaviour as a Criterion of Emotion

In fact, as I pointed out above, psychologists, like Woodworth, do operate with another criterion. They are able to identify an emotional state not only because it has a cognitive element but also because there is a correlation between a physiological state and a particular pattern of behaviour or disposition to behave that the physiological state gives rise to. On this basis it can be decided whether the organism is in a high state of arousal and of course once the correlation has been made, an emotional state can be identified separately from descriptions of behaviour. R.Melzack and K.L. Casey, for example, claim; 'that while a high level of arousal or activation cannot be equated with emotion, nonetheless, it is the most characteristic feature of emotion' (17) (other physiological states are also correlated with emotional behaviour, for example, hormonal and visceral changes (18) ). Furthermore, it can be shown that high levels of arousal will correlate with particular forms of behaviour and on this basis different emotions can be distinguished.

Behaviour then, as well as cognition, is crucial in identifying emotion in affective as well as conceptual terms. But both are needed. If emotion cannot be identified only by the appraisal being made, it cannot be identified simply by the behavioural response either. Clearly, the meaning of some emotions will be more dependent on the appraisal, like jealousy, vanity, envy; and others like anxiety, fear, anger, will rely more heavily on forms of behaviour. But even the latter are still dependent on an understanding of the object of emotion. But while there is a conceptual link between emotion and behaviour the connection is not a tight one. Firstly, because the same emotion can exhibit itself in different forms of behaviour; for example, two men can see a situation as threatening and feel equally afraid, but while one faces the danger, the other runs away. Secondly, and conversely, because different emotions can be exhibited in the same pattern of behaviour, for example, two women at a party could start a fight but for completely different reasons, one because she is angry, the other for reasons of pride. This shows behaviour can be unreliable; we can be mistaken if all we have to go on is his outward behaviour

and it also shows the strength and necessity of the person's assessment of a situation in identifying emotion.

But still the point remains that if emotion is more than a question of appraisal, the conceptual connection between particular emotions and certain forms of behaviour must also hold, if only loosely; and hold, if not for the whole of the time, at least for most of it. If persons who perceived a situation as dangerous always behaved differently we would not have the concept of fear we do in fact have. It is because generally speaking human beings try to avoid what is dangerous, we can still believe that the person who faces danger is afraid, because we can show physiologically he had the tendency to run away. Indeed, it is on this basis that we would assess a person as brave, because he had overcome the natural inclination to run away. In other words, if various persons after appraising a situation similarly, all behaved in differing and conflicting ways then there would be no justification for saying they were experiencing the same emotion.

Often the relationship is conceptually loose in a different sense, in that there is simply no one appropriate form of behaviour which can be associated with a particular emotional experience, (for example despair, grief, frustration, anxiety). Hence the connection with R.S. Peters refers to between emotion and wishing (19). But while no specific form of behaviour may be appropriate, and while also there may be different ways a person will react in behavioural terms to the same situation, nonetheless, certain forms of behaviour are characteristic of those emotions, like compassion, remorse, despair, sympathy and so on. Certainly the connection still holds, if only negatively; if for example, in experiencing grief, people generally spent their time enjoying themselves our understanding of this emotion would be totally different. It does seem then that even in these cases the conceptual link between emotion and behaviour still holds, in that there are limits to what would be thought appropriate and because at the very least certain forms of behaviour are ruled out. I would conclude that there is a conceptual connection not only between emotion and various types of cognition but also between emotion and appropriate forms of behaviour or dispositions to behave.



(c) The Importance of Feeling States to an Understanding of Emotion

Finally, I would wish to argue that our understanding of emotion does not only depend on these two criteria outlined above. For just as it can be argued that an appraisal in itself does not entail a person being emotionally affected, so the same can be said of a particular pattern of behaviour. Neither can this understanding of the feeling side of emotion be provided by identifying a physiological state, because this already presupposes such an understanding in identifying emotional behaviour. If emotion could be explained in only conceptual and behavioural terms, then robots could be described as being as capable of experiencing emotion as human beings. An understanding of emotion therefore also depends on our personal experience of actually having feelings. This is why we are capable of sympathy as well as rational understanding. It is only because we are creatures of feeling, that we can understand what it is to be in pain, to feel sorrow, joy, grief, remorse and so on, for either we have experienced them ourselves or can imaginatively identify with those who have. In defending this view, however, I am not suggesting that feeling states can be experienced or identified separately from the appraisal being made or the tendencies one has to behave in particular ways. Clearly, this would be impossible, but what I am saying is that feeling states cannot be reduced to what these might happen to be, and I suppose the upshot of this must be that introspection will after all, play a part in our understanding of emotion, why then has it been discredited?

C.A. Mace in his article *Introspection and Analysis* (20) argues that psychologists like Titchener who worked out elaborate techniques to train observers to introspect were largely ineffective because they failed to see the nature of their difficulties, that they were not due so much to observing the facts but in knowing how to describe them. He says the idea of describing personal experiences is intelligible enough: 'the facts are there for all to see but we do not know how to say what we see'. 'There is accordingly a prima facie case for the hypothesis, the problems of introspection are in part at least problems of analysis' (21). In reply to this we can say it is clearly impossible to describe what is only a private event.

We can only communicate and share our feelings with others because they are public property and therefore depend for their meaning on an understanding of the situation a person is in, the appraisal he makes and this disposition he has to behave in a particular way, but the feeling state is still there, only as Strawson says you cannot drive a logical wedge between them (22).

(d) Value Judgments and Affective Experience

It is often thought that the values a person holds will depend on his conceptual understanding and his ability to make and universalize value judgments,, (23) but equally important is how he experiences life affectively. Increased conceptual understanding and the ability to make rational appraisals may lead to initiation into the different sources of value mentioned earlier but not necessarily to the personal acceptance of these values.

Knowledge is not simply acquired, it has to be sought after and therefore depends on a person's desire for it. Knowledge in itself is inert. What counts is how a man experiences it. Does it appeal to him? Does it make any difference to the extent, depth and variety of ways he experiences life? In short does it make any difference to the person that he knows and understands more than he did before?

Similarly, to appreciate aesthetic values whether generally or in the specific context of an art form depends on personal experience. Certainly aesthetic understanding, particularly in the arts is dependent on a great deal of knowing, sensitive awareness and fine judgment, but aesthetic value is something over and above rational appraisal. The critic may help us to understand a particular work of art by pointing out certain objective features and by trying to convey through metaphor, its emotional meaning or import, but in the last analysis what counts is whether we come to 'see' its value for ourselves. Clearly the teacher of art appreciation is often disappointed. (See also pp.238-240.)

Lastly, it could also be argued that the religious and moral values a person comes to believe in are not simply the result of rational



belief or the initiation into a particular moral code or religious way of life, the person is an agent and will, to some extent, make up his own mind and this will depend on how he is affected by the issues, situations and predicaments that he encounters. Two persons with similar social backgrounds and with equal ability in making their own judgments, can, when faced with the same situation, react very differently. The Salvation Army calls for converts, one person goes forward the other stays back. A mutual friend gets the sack for serious misconduct, one person feels sympathy for him, the other feels nothing but contempt. These, could no doubt be explained as a difference in the values the two men hold but it could be argued that they are just affected differently and it is because of this that they come to hold the values they do.

Of course no one realised more the important part that feeling or passion played in the making of our value judgments in general, and our moral judgments in particular, than David Hume, because for him it was the main motivation behind his moral philosophy in opposing rationalist thinking of the time. Reason, he argued, is impotent in the sphere of morals. It is the passionate side of our nature which is at work when we make moral discriminations which are more properly felt than judged. In analysing our moral judgments, he says:

'the vice entirely escapes you so long as you consider only the object. You will not find the vice until you turn your attention to the sentiment or disapprobation in your own breast towards the object' (24).

Consequently, on Hume's account it would be quite possible for different persons to witness the same events but to pass different moral judgments and this could not be explained by reason but by the difference of moral sentiment that each person possessed and whether it caused them pain or pleasure. But this did not mean that Hume was a pure hedonist, for he distinguished between pleasures which determine moral conduct from other kinds of pleasures, in that the former arise from the contemplation of some lasting quality in the personal character of a person which

may be revealed in action or sentiment, and because it would be viewed disinterestedly and not from the position of self interest for example, in admiring bravery in one's enemy. Moral judgment, for Hume, was therefore dependent on objective qualities that are perceived as well as the feeling they give rise to (25). But in spite of Hume's obvious insight into human nature, his moral philosophy is strongly attacked because of the distinction he makes between reason and passion. In his eagerness to give an alternative to rationalism he fails to see that the two are intimately connected, that we cannot separate feelings from the assessment that we make in a moral situation or the reasons we have for acting in a particular way.

Hume's concern was with what moves us to action and to pass judgment. The answer, he believed was to be found in an understanding of human nature rather than rational belief. In this connection his concept of sympathy (which was not a passion, but the means by which we can identify the feelings of others in ourselves) was particularly important. For Hume believed that it was because of this human capacity, that man is sufficiently motivated to care for his fellow man (with the help of certain artificial conventions) and to be united with other members of society for the pursuit of the common good. It seems a pity, if in criticising Hume for being unable to recognise that reasoning is a practical matter, (26) that in failing to realise that it is not reason but knowledge which is inert and that passion and reason cannot be conceptually separated, if attention is diverted from the importance he attached to feeling and our natural inclination as a motivating force in our moral behaviour. Because, as I have consistently argued throughout this chapter, while feelings cannot be separated from rational belief, they cannot be reduced to them either. Kant may have been right in emphasizing that man is only moral in so far as he is rational, but could a person be moral who is incapable of moral feeling, like Christian love? Would man ever be sufficiently moved to act on the universal judgments he had made if he had no feeling of concern or of caring for his fellow men? In short would duty be enough? For further discussion on this see chapter six pp.129-133.



To say that our values and attitudes are dependent on our capacity for feeling is not to deny that value judgments involve formal, rational considerations or that feelings are not conceptual. Neither is it being claimed that when a value judgment is made a person has to be in a highly emotive state, nor that he is necessarily trying to arouse the same feelings in others. If a person is concerned that another should come to share in the same values of a situation, activity or way of life, he will do so by pointing out the objective features on which the values he hold depend, and not necessarily by describing his subjective state. The enthusiast or devotee can in this way enable another to understand all the considerations on which his own values are based, but ultimately he may still be unsuccessful. The newly initiated can say 'this may excite you, but frankly it leaves me cold', or 'obviously you've seen the light but I am still not convinced', or 'I understand and admire your reasons but I am unable to join you'.

Experiencing life is, in one sense, then, a private affair dependent on a personal view point but it is also dependent on what we know and this is only possible if there is common agreement. It is equally true that it is because we have common experiences, that we are able to speak and understand the same language, share the same values and participate in the same activities, in short to share in the same way of life. (The enthusiast or devotee may sometimes be unsuccessful in winning a new convert but this will not always be the case).

So far I have talked at some length about the person as a centre of human experience and in so doing I have already presupposed the capacity a person necessarily has for human agency, that is, his ability to initiate and carry out action. An examination of this is therefore somewhat overdue.

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## FOOTNOTES

- 1 See E. Linden, Apes, Men and Language, (Penguin Books 1974).
- 2 M. Midgley, Beast and Man, (Harvester 1979.)
- 3 I. Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, trans., Kemp Smith, (Macmillan 1929). p.106.
- 4 See G. Humphrey, Thinking: An Introduction to Its Experimental Psychology, (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd. 1951) for the history of associationism. In fact it originated as a theory of philosophy T. Hobbes being its main forefather.
- 5 For a philosophical criticism of abstractionism see R.F. Dearden, 'Instruction and Learning by Discovery', in The Concept of Education, (ed.) R.S. Peters (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1967).
- 6 G.F. Stout, A Manual of Psychology, (London University Tutorial Press Ltd. 1947) pp 503-520.
- 7 See, for example, - J. Piaget, 'Stages of Intellectual Development In the Child and Adolescent', in The Child and Reality (F. Muller 1975) chapter 3.
- 8 See, for example, T. Mischel, 'Piaget: Cognitive Conflict and Motivation', in Cognitive Development and Epistemology, ' ed. T. Mischel. (Academic Press 1971)
- and D.W. Hamlyn, 'Epistemology and Conceptual Development', also in Cognitive Development and Epistemology, op. cit.
- and R.S. Peters 'The Development of Reason', in Psychology and Ethical Development, (London. George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1974).
- 9 See pp.138-161.
- 10 One of the outstanding problems in psychology is how the child



- first acquires language see D.W. Hamlyn, Experience and the Growth of Understanding, (Routledge & Kegan Paul 1978) Chapter 8. for an examination of the problem.
- 11 A. Quinton, 'John Dewey's Theory of Knowledge', in John Dewey Reconsidered, ed. R.S. Peters (Routledge & Kegan Paul 1977).
  - 12 See R.S. Peters, 'Reason and Passion', in Psychology and Ethical Development, op. cit.
  - 13 This is looked at more fully later on see pp.167-169.
  - 14 See R.S. Woodworth, 'The James-Lange Theory of Emotion', in Psychology, (Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1945) Chapter XII p.426.
  - 15 Ibid, p.427.
  - 16 See R.S. Peters, 'The Education of the Emotions', in Psychology and Ethical Development op. cit.
  - 17 R. Melzack and K.L. Casey, 'The Affective Dimension of Pain', in Feelings and Emotions, ed. M. Arnold (Academic Press 1970) p.64.
  - 18 See, for example, J.V. Brady, 'Some Conceptual Problems and Psychophysiological Experiments', in Feelings and Emotions, ed. M. Arnold. op cit.
  - 19 R.S. Peters, *ibid.*, p.180.
  - 20 C.A. Mace, 'Introspection and Analysis', in M. Mace, C.A.Mace Selected Papers, (London: Methuen 1973) pp 254-266.
  - 21 *Ibid.*, p.263.
  - 22 P.F. Strawson, Individuals, (Methuen & Co. Ltd. 1959) p.108.
  - 23 See R.M. Hare, Freedom and Reason, (Oxford University Press 1963.)

- 24 D. Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, (Oxford University Press 888) Book 3 p.468.
- 25 For further comments on this point see, for example, T. Penelhum Hume, (Macmillan Press 1975) p.148-150.
- 26 See, for example, R. Edgley, 'Practical Reason', in Education and the Development of Reason, ed. R.F. Dearden et. al. (Routledge & Kegan Paul 1972).



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## CHAPTER FIVE: HUMAN AGENCY

In the last chapter I explained how the person is characterised as a centre of experience. which can be described as being both conceptually structured and affectively sensitized, but he is also an agent characterised by his capacity to initiate and carry out human actions, where 'action' means more than simply effecting a certain result. It has been suggested for example that a person's actions are occurrences which it makes sense to qualify in certain ways, for example, as voluntary, purposive, conscious, intentional etc. and that it is these qualifications which provide the criteria for distinguishing human actions from non-actions or actions of other kinds. But they do not tell us what the difference actually is and philosophers vary in their attempts to explain (1).

### i TELEOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF AGENCY

There are those like E.E.M. Anscombe, C. Taylor and A.I. Melden who give a teleological explanation of human actions. G. Anscombe, suggests that intentional actions are distinguished from those which are not, because they are actions to which a certain sense of the question 'why?' is given application. In other words there must be reasons for acting which give the action point. But as reasons obviously can be given for actions that are not intentional what becomes crucial is the kind of reason given. A totally causal explanation, for example, would not do (2). Charles Taylor, argues that a human action is necessarily directed towards a goal, which can be identified independently of antecedent conditions or a causal description and it is the desire for this goal which provides the agent's reason for acting (3). Similarly, A. Melden draws attention to the distinction between action and mere bodily movement by showing that in the case of an action the person has a reason for acting (as opposed to there just being one) which is based on his evaluation of some envisaged goal (4). He further holds, that because value judgments must inevitably lie behind the actions we



take, the concept of human action can only be fully understood in a social context. This means, he says, that the description of any action must take into account, 'that we are concerned with the actions of human beings who are social and moral beings and who are guided in their conduct by social and moral considerations in their dealings with one another' (5).

A similar point is made by R.S. Peters in his book 'The Concept of Motivation', where he maintains that actions are logically irreducible to movement terms. He speaks of a logical gulf between nature and convention and gives as an example the logical impossibility of translating the statement, 'he signed the contract', into movement terms like, 'he moved the pen in such and such a way' (6). C. Taylor, however, has argued that in this particular example R.S. Peters does not succeed in showing the logical distinction between movement and action, but rather the irreducibility of signing a contract to other action terms (7). But this criticism does not seem to me to be valid, for surely action can only be explained in relation to other action terms, particularly if the action is described more specifically than 'he signed the contract', if, for example, the exact nature of the contract was specified. But no amount of description just referring to bodily movement would explain the action taking place. C. Taylor seems to think that even the phrase 'he moved the pen in such and such a way' could constitute an action, but in fact it depends how it is interpreted, if it was understood to mean simply that 'the pen was moved in such and such a way' with no implication of intention, then Peters' argument still stands. If, in this context, Taylor's distinction between movement and action differs from the one Peters makes I cannot see where the difference lies.

By defining agency in terms of the agent's purpose or goal-directed behaviour it is possible to describe an action in the long or short term, depending on whether the intended result is far away or close at hand. Often an action can be analysed into a series of simpler acts, or, it may, in itself, be seen only as a part of a larger enterprise and be assessed simply as a means to it. Obviously some actions are carried out for their own sake and at times an activity can serve both as a means and as an end, (indeed it may not always be possible to

distinguish between the two (8) ). As an action must come under either one or both of these descriptions, then clearly the idea of undertaking something for its own sake must be essential to our understanding of intentional action. As Aristotle pointed out the chain has to stop somewhere, if our actions are only ever assessed as means they cease to be means and therefore cease to have any point; instrumental activities only make sense if ultimately what is reached is worthwhile in itself. But this does not mean that we always act with some final end in view, or that we have to believe as Aristotle did that all chains of man's actions must finally stop at the same place.

Whether a particular action is understood in terms of immediate or distant goals, human action can only be identified by reference to some kind of intended outcome which provides the agent's reason for acting and indeed defines the action itself. It is on this basis that Melden argues that:

'while in a causal sequence cause and effect are logically distinct, in an action there is a definite logical connection between the action and the reason for the action and so reasons cannot be considered as causes' (9).

While it is often possible to distinguish a difference between what we actually do and what we had hoped to achieve, the former can only be understood in terms of the latter. We cannot therefore identify a person's actions unless we at least know what he is trying to do. Those like R. Chisholm are therefore right in suggesting that essential to a theory of intentional action, is the concept of 'a completely successful intentional action' (10), and I think we can agree with this without necessarily accepting his account of causal agency.

However, this kind of logical connection between the action and the agent's reason for acting is often argued against on the grounds that because a person does not always act in the way that he intends, an action can often be described independently of, and even contrary to, a person's intentions. Philosophers have argued that it is just not true to say that X cannot be the action of A unless A knew or intended it under that description (11). There are several ways of looking at this problem.



In many situations while the agent's intention is still crucial, different descriptions can be given, regarding what the agent is actually doing. For example: a hiker may consider he is going on a trek but a farmer may see the same action as trespassing; a child may believe he is trying to learn Algebra, while as far as the teacher is concerned, he is only copying off the blackboard. Clearly, in both cases the descriptions given are not incompatible and therefore present no problem. They could in fact be used to illustrate the first two distinctions the jurists have made between three classes of act: the actual physical movement, acts and circumstances, acts and consequences (12). But there is a difficulty where the descriptions of an action do conflict. Often this can be resolved by taking the person's avowal of intention as decisive; for example, passers by seeing a child climbing a tree may consider he is playing, when in fact he is trying to rescue his friend. But not always; there are situations where not only is the account given by the agent different, but where the agent is actually wrong in what he thinks he is doing: a holiday maker may think he is travelling through Germany when in fact he is touring France; a life saver may believe he is rescuing a drowning man, when he is already too late, a doctor may consider he is curing his patient, after he has prescribed the wrong medicine. But I would wish to argue that even these examples do not destroy the general logical connection between action and reason, rather they show that intentions are dependent on beliefs and these can sometimes be wrong, but they cannot always be wrong or we would not have the concept of human action we do in fact have.

The other kind of situation, which is usually cited in an attempt to show that causal factors rather than just intention is crucial to explaining human action, occurs when a person is no longer responsible for what he is doing. For example in the actions of a psychopath, where only a causal explanation would be sufficient. But drawing attention to this kind of example would not help to break the logical connection between action and a person's reason for acting; rather it would simply serve to illustrate those cases where human agency breaks down and a person acts because of what he suffers or undergoes, rather than because of what he does. In these cases the word 'action' therefore ceases to be appropriate.

But it would be wrong to claim that identifying and defining a human action is always dependent on a person's intention, for there are times where a person is responsible for actions which he did not intend and where in fact no reference to intention may be relevant. For example a man, while cleaning his gun, which he knows to be loaded, inadvertently fires it, killing his wife. In this kind of situation a causal description may be thought to be appropriate for a person may be seen as a causal agent but not an agent of an intentional act. Although the same example could be re-described in which the action only refers to the intentional part (cleaning the gun), and where the act of killing is then seen as the unintended consequence of the agent's action, the fact remains that on either account, this is something the agent did and consequently he may be found morally as well as causally responsible for it. I shall return to this kind of difficulty later (13). In the meantime, as the notion of responsibility now also looks fairly crucial to our understanding of human agency this needs closer examination.

## ii THE NOTION OF RESPONSIBILITY

In so far as a person's actions can only be explained in terms of his purposes, intentions and values, then, to that extent, the person can be said to be responsible for what he does (although as already suggested, he may be held responsible for other reasons as well). H.Hart, for example, has held that an action is not to describe anything that has happened but to ascribe responsibility for it (14); while C.Taylor argues, that the idea of an action being directed towards some goal does not simply depend on bringing about certain results or being accounted for by certain laws, but rather he says, it hangs on 'it's being true of some locus of responsibility or agent that it directed behaviour towards this goal' (15).

The idea of attributing responsibility to an agent for his own action has, however, been criticised on several counts:-

For example, J. Feinberg comments on the fact that when we say that Smith is responsible for X we can simply mean that X is the result of what Smith did. In a similar way we can hold the low pressure responsible



for the oncoming storms (16). Obviously in ascribing responsibility to the person qua agent more than this is implied. I would wish to argue that in this latter sense, responsibility suggests that a person is accountable for what he does, this is because the person's actions can only be understood in terms of his reasons for acting, which in turn are based on the beliefs and attitudes he holds and on the judgments he has made. It can be said therefore, that a person is responsible for his actions, to the extent to which it is the result of what he intended. It should be added that this will not necessarily mean that there is any implication of fault imputability or creditability; although as it happens, it is precisely when a person's behaviour is considered under these descriptions that questions of responsibility arise, for there may be moral or legal reasons why it becomes important to know whether responsibility is correctly ascribed to a particular person.

But there are those who would argue that the person is responsible for his action, regardless of what he might have intended (for example causing a road accident) and that therefore we can judge a person to be responsible for an action without first having to ascertain the reasons or purposes behind his behaviour. This brings us to the second main criticism of those like Hart and Taylor who consider 'responsibility' to be being definitive of action, and that is, that they fail to distinguish between the action we take and the deeds that we do. Once this distinction is borne in mind it is thought to be apparent that the latter may be due to causal factors rather than intention. This is usually argued for in two different ways.

Firstly, that while we can be held responsible for our actions in the sense that they can be ascribed to us, we are not necessarily responsible for the consequences of our actions, it may depend for example on how important a causal contribution our actions make to the upshot and the extent to which other factors play a part (17). Secondly, it is argued that it is only in respect to the consequences of our action that we are responsible, which may, or may not be, what we intended. G. Pitcher, for example, argues that it is not the action that a person can be held responsible for, because he simply does this, but what his action 'causes' to happen (18).

It is interesting that the above arguments do not actually question whether it is appropriate to ascribe responsibility to an agent, but rather the grounds on which responsibility is ascribed. If one holds a teleological view then intention is crucial. If a person's actions were only described in causal terms then it would be either impossible to know whether to ascribe responsibility to an agent or it would actually rule it out. But if the position of a causal theorist is taken, it is precisely on these grounds that responsibility can be attributed, because he understands agency as what an agent causally brings about. This may be understood in terms of the person's movements or in terms of the causal contribution that he makes to the events that follow his action; in either case the intention of the person is not necessarily crucial.

Who then is right? The answer to this clearly depends on the more fundamental question :- can a sufficient explanation of human action be provided teleologically or is a causal explanation also required?

### iii CAUSAL AGENCY

There are many who do consider that the notion of causal agency is essential to any explanation of human action. D. Davidson, for example, argues strongly against Melden's account (19). Initially he accepts that human action can only be identified and explained with reference to a person's reasons for acting, which place it within a social context. He says,

'to learn through learning, the reason that the agent conceived his action as a lie, a repayment of a debt, an insult . . . . is to grasp the point of the action in its setting of rules, practices, convention and expectations' (20).

But this, he argues, is not enough to explain that the person acted because of these reasons. It is the force of 'because' which is to be found wanting. He says, a person can have a reason for acting and perform it but this may not be the reason why he did it (a man may be making ten carbon copies as he writes and this may be intentional yet he may not know that he is, all he knows is that he is trying (21) ).



It is only when a causal explanation is also given that the reasons for an action taking place are fully explained. For example, it is not sufficient that I have the intention of jumping off the top board I have to actually jump, and so a causal explanation in the end is both appropriate and necessary.

But while Davidson explains human action in terms of causal agency not any kind of causal explanation will do. In his view, it is not enough to show the causal contribution a particular person makes to a series of events because this may be due only to outside causal factors. For example, if I spilled my coffee because someone jiggled my hand, then this is a question of what happens to me not a question of what I do (the actions of the psychopath would also come into this category). What is crucial is intention. If I causally effect what I intend, then responsibility for my action can be attributed to me. But Davidson still accepts that agents can be causally responsible for actions they did not intend: to continue the above example, I would be causally responsible if I spilled the coffee unintentionally, thinking it was tea. Davidson explains these cases by trying to show that the same act can be described in different ways, and that providing what a person in fact does is identical with what he does intentionally, but mistakenly, he is still the agent of the act. This would be the case in the current example, because my intentionally spilling what I think is tea is identical to me mistakenly spilling the coffee.

Davidson says, 'A man is the agent of an act if what he does can be described under an aspect that makes it intentional' (22). But what is it that the agent can be said to 'do'? In many accounts of causal agency what matters are the physical changes a person brings about which can be narrowly or broadly described. J. Feinberg, refers to 'the accordion effect where the meaning of an action includes the outcome which can be squeezed down to a minimum or else stretched out', and where responsibility depends on causal contribution to the outcome regardless of intention (23). Davidson criticises Feinberg's description of human action, partly because it fails to take intention into account, but more strongly because it includes the outcome in the meaning of an action. For, according to Davidson, while a person is causally responsible for the upshot of his action, this is not classed as a part

of the action, because the action is something we just do and not something we can be said to cause; its description is therefore limited to the primitive action of bodily movement, the rest, he says, is up to nature.

'We may indeed extend responsibility for an action to the responsibility for its consequences, but this we do, not by saddling the agent with a new action, but by pointing out his original action had those results' (24).

But at this point Davidson's account no longer seems to me to be coherent; for as he limits action to bodily movement, then intention can only be said to define the action to the extent that I can intend to move my body. But in most of the actions we perform our intentions are concerned with what our bodily movements will bring about, not with the movements themselves. Davidson's argument is, that these are different descriptions of the same event; but while this can be the case, as in his example of causing the death of the king, it does not have to be. In giving orders to have an animal destroyed, the description of my bodily movement is irrelevant to the action, I indirectly but intentionally perform. By defining action in terms of primitive movement and by distinguishing it from its consequences, a person becomes in effect a causal agent, and intention which should have been logically tied to the action, becomes redundant.

J. Corman's example illustrates this well (25), he describes the action of a technician who wires a switch intentionally but incorrectly because he is given an incorrect wiring diagram, as a result a rocket explodes on take off, killing its crew. What the technician does intentionally, but mistakenly, is identical to the event which caused the deaths of the members of the crew, are we then to say the agent is responsible for their deaths? On Davidson's account we would have to, for although agency depends on the person having an intention it does not seem to matter what the intention is, and we can conclude that this intentional criterion does not necessarily serve any purpose in ascribing responsibility to an agent. It turns out, that to say a person's act has to be described under an intentional aspect is only helpful in making the distinction between agency and non-agency if



it coincides or is compatible with the description of what actually happens.

In fact, the only way a causal explanation of human action seems to make any sense is if it is described only in causal terms. But of course this would not explain the action of the person qua person. If I initiate a sequence of events I may be said to be causally responsible but the same can be said of the wind. No wonder then, that given the area of interest is the action of human beings rather than human bodies, who perform actions because of what they wish to achieve in terms of their values and desires and who live in a social and not just a physical world, that so much attention is attached to intention, that is, a person's reason for acting, and not to what he just causally effects. Even those philosophers who try to assimilate reasons to causes recognise as much. But if intention is the hallmark of agency then a causal explanation is at best otiose and at worst extremely confusing.

It is otiose because if two persons can be causally responsible in exactly the same way (for example in pressing a button which fires a missile), but only one is held responsible as an agent, because what he does can be described under an intentional aspect, then agency cannot be said to depend on causal responsibility. The most that could be said, would be that it provided a necessary condition but this does not mean it provides an explanation of human action. Similarly, it could be argued that to understand music I must be able to hear, but this does not make hearing definitive of appreciating music. And it is confusing, because the causal theorist wants to hold, that while intention is crucial to our understanding of human action it does not necessarily explain why a person acts in the way he does, the notion of causal agency is also required. In fact, on this view, intention is often seen to be irrelevant to what the person can be said to be doing, because this can be described independently of any intention: it may be argued, for example, that the person has no intention at all, regarding what he is doing; or he may have one, but it is contrary to what he is actually doing; or he may have the right intention but this may not be the cause of his action. But then the causal theorist is in a dilemma because if causality in these cases is

seen to be the distinguishing mark of agency, how can intention be said to play a part at all?

What some try to show is that intention or reasons for acting do ascribe agency to a person, to the extent to which they can be said to cause the person to act in the way he does. But in giving a causal explanation they have to distinguish between the cause (i.e. 'the action') and its effects (i.e. 'the outcome'). By failing to acknowledge that reasons for acting (i.e. the intended outcome) are logically tied to the meaning and description of the action, the action is ultimately reduced to bodily movement. It is therefore only this which can be said to cause the outcome not our reasons for acting, which cannot be understood in only these terms, and this is why on a causalists' account, a person is still responsible for what he did not intend. But without some reference to intention the whole notion of causal responsibility as a way of ascribing agency becomes trivial, for there is no end to the sequence of events I might happen to cause, not only because of what I do, but also because of what I don't happen to do.

#### iv 'RESPONSIBILITY' CONSIDERED FURTHER

One of the reasons why causal agency is often considered important and necessary to any account of human action is that it helps to explain those cases where a person is held responsible, but where there is no question of compulsion of any kind (so agency is not actually ruled out) but where the person acts unintentionally or perhaps with no intention at all. Now while it is true that if a person did not effect a certain result he would not be held responsible, it is not true to say (and this is a point I made earlier) that it is for this reason that he is accountable for what he has done. But if causal theorists cannot explain responsibility simply in causal terms, it might be thought that those holding a teleological view will have just as much difficulty in providing an explanation, at least in those cases where intention is not the deciding factor.

But in fact, these can be explained and without recourse to some causal



analysis, by bearing in mind that the notion of responsibility is much wider than that of intended action. There are many situations where we are responsible for what we do regardless of the reasons we may or may not have had at the time. This is because we are social beings as well as individual agents and are therefore subject to various rules and obligations that are necessary for the functioning and well being of our society. As members of a society we inevitably belong to different classes or groups of persons held together by mutual interests and purposes; because the existence of these groups is dependent on there being rules which are adhered to we will inevitably be held to account if we break the rules. When a motorist is found responsible for causing a road accident he is found to be responsible not simply because he caused it to happen, but because his behaviour as a motorist is found to be faulty, that is, as a member of a particular category of persons which demands its own standards of behaviour and where the person's reasons for acting may be irrelevant. Similarly, a professional musician will be judged according to his performance, if he plays badly it will not help if he protests that this was due to him losing his place on the manuscript.

But interestingly, some excuses or reasons for a person's action do count and do overrule the judgment made on other criteria. This is because most classes or groups we belong to we also belong to as persons and so the nature of personal agency is presupposed in the activities and conduct of the group. If it can be shown that a default in a person's behaviour is due to certain personal incapacities (e.g. severe mental illness) then responsibility for what a person had causally brought about would not be attributed to him qua person.

The social character of many of our actions is also a relevant factor in explaining why we are held responsible for the action of others rather than just our own actions. This may be ascribed to us on one of two counts: either, (1) because we belong to a particular group and because what is done, is done under the name of that group so responsibility is collective; or, (2) because we are personally in overall charge of a group of persons, responsibility for what happens rests with us, regardless of whether or not we personally brought it about.

It is sometimes thought to be a problem that someone may be carrying out an activity but not know that he is, or he may have the right intention, but it is not because of this intention that he is successful. But here again, this can often be explained by taking account of the fact, that because the actions and activities we perform are social in nature, we have to learn what to do before we can perform them. The child learning to play tennis, and with that intention, may have started to master it, but he may not know that he has, because to begin with he will have to rely on the knowledge of someone else to tell him when he is playing correctly (i.e. in accordance with the rules and techniques of tennis) (26).

In conclusion, it can be said that the fact that the notion of responsibility is social and wider than that of intentional action does not alter or lead us to deny the importance of responsibility to the concept of personal agency (and therefore to the concept of the person). To ascribe responsibility to a person as an agent means that he can in principle give an account of what he does, because it is based on his reasons for acting, which in turn are based on his beliefs and value judgments. And to say this is consistent with the fact that the person lives in a society so that his actions and decisions will be based on what is on offer and will depend on objective considerations, the social rules he has to adhere to and the moral obligations he has to fulfil in order to carry them through.

Furthermore, the responsibility of the agent is not limited to his actions, for the same reason which is used in ascribing responsibility to the agent underlies his purely mental as well as his physical undertakings, namely, the belief that the person has aims and purposes which arise from his ability as an evaluator.

#### v THE AGENT AS EVALUATOR

Personal agency is dependent on our capacity to make value judgments. Acting intentionally presupposes having reasons for acting based on the goals or ends men wish to achieve. It might therefore be argued that human beings are not alone in being agents because animals are also



capable of initiating action and directing their behaviour towards particular ends. They too can be said to have desires and even to make choices between them. How then can human agency be distinguished from the action of animals?

H. Frankfurt in 'Freedom and the Will and the Concept of the Person' (27) suggests the answer lies in the fact that persons are capable of second order desires. He says, human beings are not alone in having desires, but they are alone in having second order ones, that is, desires whose object lies in having a certain first order desire. In other words persons can evaluate their desires and this means they are capable of self evaluation, to the extent that they identify themselves with those desires. It is only because of this that a person can assess his action and give an account of it and therefore be deemed responsible. (It would not be enough to show that a person just had certain first order desires because these are in a sense 'given' they are not something he has any choice over).

C. Taylor takes this point further in his article 'What is Human Agency?' (28). He says what is distinctive of the human agent is the qualitative nature of the assessment he makes. 'Good' in this instance does not simply depend on whether or not the object is desired but on how we judge our desires and this involves being able to give reasons, being able to justify our choices in a way that the pursuit of a desired goal does not. It is therefore possible for the agent to see that the stronger desire is not necessarily the better one.

The possibility of making qualitative evaluations is dependent on being in a world where richness of experience is available in different activities and forms of life, characterised by their own rules and purposes. To become an agent is therefore dependent on initiation into what is considered to be worthwhile by the society in which he lives. It could be argued further that as this happens from the earliest of days that even first order desires are dependent on the social values children are taught to accept and these will not only be restricted to hedonistic ones (29). In fact, so called human needs and wants are often more dependent on a society's underlying ethical system than on physiological deficiencies. Indeed, it is only because of the activities

and social conventions we come to understand that we are able to make second order evaluations or qualitative assessments at all. But it could be argued that these are then just as much 'given' as natural desires. For example, we may desire to be honest and believe this to be better than cheating in order to fulfil some hedonistic pleasure, but we may not know why. We could give reasons, but they would be limited to such things as from fear of punishment or out of respect for some authority (30). Clearly, what is missing is not the knowledge of different kinds of values but the capacity of the person to reflect on them and to decide his own course of action because he sees the value of it for himself.

It is not surprising therefore, that at the end of Taylor's article emphasis is put on the importance of self evaluation, where the assessments and reassessments the agent makes affect his identity; an identity which Taylor defines in terms of certain essential evaluations which provide the horizon or foundations for the other evaluations he makes (31). But it is not necessarily an unchanging horizon because it is always open to the person that he can make radical evaluations; for without necessarily having the viewpoint of an existentialist, it is still possible to believe in the agent's capacity to rethink his whole life style which could then influence the numerous and various decisions and assessments he makes in his daily life.

But this capacity of reflection, and indeed of the will presupposes that the agent is, in at least a negative sense, a 'free' agent; that his 'choices' are not simply determined by natural inclination or social convention (this is not to say that choosing and being free are the same, only that the former in some sense presupposes the latter). It is therefore important to consider what these conditions of freedom might be.

S. Benn, in his article 'Freedom, Autonomy and the Concept of a Person', (32) suggests that for a person to be in a position of choice four criteria have to be fulfilled:

- (1) there are determinate sets of resources at the person's disposal,
- (2) he is confronted with a set of opportunity costs, if he pursues X he must forego Y,



- (3) he has goals forming an ordered preference set in the light of which he makes choices,
- (4) he has a set of beliefs about 1-3 about relation of resources as means to goals.

The first two conditions are objective the second two are subjective. Clearly, for a person to be in a position of choice alternatives have to be open to him, but his ability to decide between them is dependent on subjective rather than just objective criteria. For example, Benn draws attention to the person's capacity to change his mind in the light of new information, of formulating projects where decisions are taken now and for the future. In a similar vein R.S. Peters in his article, 'Freedom and the Development of the Free Man', emphasizes the importance of the agent being able to: weigh up alternatives; think in terms of means-end, appreciate the causal property of things; and distinguish consequences brought about by his own agency from those that come about independently of his will (33). Sometimes, the importance and necessity of these conditions are often best realised when they are not seen to be fulfilled. S.Benn describes those cases where a person is disqualified as a chooser because of a tendency to behave compulsively, where he is more attracted to goals of immediate gratification and when these become the only relevant considerations. (34)

But, while S.Benn maintains that to be an agent a person must be able to make choices, he also argues that this does not mean his decisions are made independently of what is socially expected of him. Indeed, he can be said to be both author of his own action and a slave to convention. This is because a person can choose by using standards he has accepted quite uncritically and can still be said to be self-governing. To illustrate this, Benn makes a useful distinction between autarchy, that is being self-governing, being the author of one's actions; and autonomy, where only the former is a condition of agency, the latter being an ideal which transcends it. On Benn's account, the autonomous person sounds very much like Taylor's human agent, for he too is characterised, by having reasons for acting and being capable of second thoughts in the light of further reasons. He is also conscious

of himself as an author, of being capable of effecting changes in the world, of appraising critically the traditions and conventions into which he has been initiated; and he is self reflecting, he too can reconsider his personal values and change them in the light of experience (35).

Has Taylor then, made the conditions of being a human agent too rigorous? For clearly, while we would wish to argue that, by definition, a person is an agent, it would simply be wrong to deny the personhood of those who are not autonomous. But if Taylor is fundamentally correct in stating that human agency is dependent on the person's capacity for evaluation (which implies self-evaluation) then it is not enough to show that the person qua agent acts on the basis of social norms. For in one sense (as I have already argued) the fact that a person's desires are dependent on the qualitative values of a particular society does not stop them being any the less 'given'. Until the agent can be said to act on the basis of his own assessment (although clearly this does not have to be in any sense original: for a person can be both self-governing and conventional) then human agency may be thought to differ very little from the agency of animals.

However, I think we can have it both ways, we can accept Taylor's criteria in principle and at the same time acknowledge that not everyone fulfils the criteria to the full. We can do this by appreciating that human agency admits of degrees; for while a person must to some extent be an evaluator not everyone will aspire to the kind of autonomy that S. Benn describes, or fulfil entirely the ideal which Taylor envisages. But the fact remains, that some degree of self evaluation is necessarily a distinguishing mark of human agency and when this is entirely missing we hesitate to attribute personhood to a human being. This can be illustrated not only by remembering those whose mental functioning is impaired through brain damage but also by considering those persons who are suffering some kind of temporary mental or personal illness, and where, as a result, their ability to act intentionally is reduced.

G.A.Foulds, in his book 'The Hierarchical Structure of Personal Illness' (36), argues that being able to even describe and diagnose mental illness



presupposes having a concept of a person as an agent and not just that of an organism, the latter only being derived from the meaning of the former. Evidence for this, Foulds argues, lies in the fact that the severity of mental illness is always seen as relative to the agent's loss of responsibility for his own action. He says,

'the more severe the illness the less the individual is able to intend his own actions and thoughts, the more he is driven by motives outside his awareness, the less he is able to choose, the more his behaviour is determined the more he ceases to be a person, and the more he becomes merely an organism' (37).

#### vi THE PERSON AS A RATIONAL AGENT

In trying to map out the criteria of human agency it becomes increasingly apparent that responsibility for action, because it is dependent on the notion of self-evaluation (having reasons for acting based on the agent's choice), that the person must of logical necessity be a rational agent. To talk of agency which is intentional rather than causal, means the person has the ability not only to take the appropriate means to achieve the desired ends, but to conceive of ends as ends and to choose between them as alternatives. As these ends or goals (unlike those of animals) tend to involve relatively complicated rule-governing activities (consider for example what is involved in the most routine of human activities like catching a bus) then even being able to just identify them demands conceptual understanding and some capacity for rational thinking. To distinguish between different human activities the person has to see each under a certain description, to understand the rules that govern them and to be able to pick out the relevant differences between them. This ability to discriminate presupposes that the person has a grasp of certain general rules or considerations, that he can at least see, 'here is the same again'. Consequently as those like Peters have argued, the development of rationality must allow the individual to transcend the present, to look beyond immediate impulses and desires and to be guided by norms to do with consistency, impartiality, relevance and truth. (38) But these norms only make sense if they are given content and must therefore be seen in relation to the human culture to which a person belongs,

of shared experiences, of law-governed activities, which are made meaningful to him through a common language, and the more extensive this is, the greater degree of choice as well as conceptual understanding which is open to the person.

The importance of language to the existence of persons as rational agents cannot be over estimated. Although certain animals can, in spite of being non-language users, be seen to conceive of ends and to take appropriate means to achieve them, while we maybe prepared to describe them as intelligent, we would hesitate to call them rational, at least in any full sense. C. Taylor points out (in the same book referred to earlier) that only language users can become aware of the ends they wish to pursue through self avowal. However, he goes on to suggest that this does not necessarily mean that non-language users are incapable of intentional action or rational thinking, although it does make it more difficult to decide whether what the animal 'does' is simply law governed or purposeful. For it may well be that to describe the action of an animal is simply to state the antecedent conditions for its behaviour.(39)

The importance and obvious difficulty in making a distinction between rule-guided and law-governed or 'regular' behaviour is particularly well illustrated by Jonathan Bennett in his book 'Rationality', where he describes and analyses the behaviour of bees (which is regular rather than rule-guided) and where he considers what would have to happen if the bees could ever be said to have a language.(40) The state that turns out to be crucial, is when the dances of the imaginary bees can be said to be intentionally performed because of what they communicate to other bees.

This ability of the bees to communicate presupposes a common understanding based on those criteria which concern the relationship between what is said in their language and what is the case about the world in which they live; it is therefore an understanding dependent on conditions of truth, on the bees capacity for knowledge as well as their ability to make universal judgments. The two former conditions would mean that these remarkable bees were able to give evidence for what they claimed to know and to test and challenge the evidence given by the



other bees; and the latter would presuppose that the language of the bees was not restricted to what was happening in the present, but would enable them to make past and predictive statements. Furthermore, this understanding would have to show itself in action, the bees would have to be able, for example, to act on new information appropriately. In order for an outsider to make sense of this language he would also have to know the needs, wants and purposes of the bees, because the meaning of their language will depend not only on truth conditions but also on the uses to which their language is put in talking about the world in which they live. But while this use of language would entitle us to say the bees are rational it turns out not to be any kind of language which would suffice. Purely descriptive language of the here and now, for example, would not do, it is explanatory language that J. Bennett shows to be essential to our understanding of rationality.

Can we then conclude that non-language users cannot be rational? I do not think so, for the fact that Bennett is so successful in showing what is distinctive of human rationality does not necessarily mean that only language users can be counted as rational agents; rather, in the case of non-language users what would have to be shown, would be that their behaviour unlike the activity of ordinary bees, was not simply law governed, but that they had a reason or reasons for their actions. And, as C. Taylor argues, this could not be done simply by ascertaining the end product of the animal's behaviour. What would count is whether it is given this direction by the animal itself.

In the case of the higher primates while much of their behaviour is law governed it may at times be seen to fulfil the above criterion. This may be true of learning situations which involve the understanding of some general principle (e.g. when the dog learns to open a door by pulling it towards itself and then applies the principle to other doors) and where a teacher is involved, the learner taking corrections, as correction (41).

But even if it is the case that animals are capable of action what those actions will consist of will always remain extremely limited, animals being non-language users do not share except minimally in human activities. It is only possible to describe an action under a particular

description, and many descriptions of human actions presuppose an understanding of complicated rule-governing activities and forms of life which can only be understood through explanatory and symbolic language.

What is distinctive of persons is not that their behaviour is goal-directed, but the nature of the goals themselves, which will vary between different generations and different cultures. But, as Taylor argues, the goals of animals are always limited to what is immediately relevant to their behaviour; they could never, for example, see the same thing under different descriptions. Conceptual understanding based on language, on the other hand, is rich, so that one action may presuppose a tremendous amount of background knowledge and understanding which the animal could never have. Indeed, Taylor goes further and argues that while it could be wrong to deny non-language users have some kind of capacity for intentional action, there is still the vital distinction that only persons can be conscious of their action, in the sense that they can describe it to themselves and to each other (42). But this ability to communicate, this in itself, is dependent on shared meanings and presupposes norms of rationality such as those concerning universality of judgment, relevance and truth.

Interestingly, while the above norms enable the person to act as a rational agent they also have a limiting effect on what he can decide and choose to do as an agent. For although the agent is essentially an evaluator, capable of deciding what is both instrumentally and intrinsically worthwhile and living his life accordingly, it is because he has to attend to rational considerations, he cannot, in effect, choose in any way he likes. He has, for example, as M. Warnock has argued, to accept the force of an argument, to change his mind in the light of new evidence, to accept the facts if he finds they are well supported, to disregard beliefs that are based on prejudice or falsehoods, and so on (43)..

As a rational agent then, he has to accept that truth and inter-subjective agreement make their own demands so that he cannot be said to have free choice in everything he does. But his potential as an evaluator is not in consequence diminished, for there is still room for the agent's own freedom of action, deliberations and decisions. For it can also be argued that the agent in conjunction with other agents make their joint



activity or pursuit what it is, for example, through their insight, skill, imagination and inventiveness (and this is as true in something like the sciences as it is in the arts). It is for this reason we hold those agents who engage in a particular activity as being responsible for it, not only in the changing of its rules or nature but also in the enforcing of existing ones. This is surely partly what R.K. Elliott draws our attention to in his article, 'Education, Love of One's Subject and the Love of Truth', when he says, that 'if we love our subject we shall ensure it is going in the right direction' (44).

There is also a very valid sense in talking about the agents own assessment, even when the nature of the assessment will be decided by pre-existing objective, or even tight logical criteria. For example, in a learning situation even though the learner may be a beginner and the path of knowledge to be followed well trodden, it will still be necessary (at least in many situations) for the person to 'see something for himself', 'to make up his own mind', 'to assess the evidence before him', 'to appreciate the value of what he is engaged in', and so on, even though there is no question on his part of him being either original or an innovator of any kind. In fact these kinds of subjective criteria are as necessary to our concept of understanding as objective ones which determine the nature of what the understanding is in. Knowledge and understanding can, therefore, be said to depend as much on our capacity of making our own evaluations as on rational or epistemological considerations. The validity of this argument is further strengthened by considering, in contrast, those persons who do not fully understand, who accept what they are told only on someone else's authority, who are unable to question, to change their beliefs in the light of new evidence, to accommodate exceptions to some general rule, and so on.

Furthermore, our nature as evaluators is not restricted to the understanding and development of specific activities, (or to our own personal cognitive development). As agents, our responsibility also lies (as we have seen) in more general evaluative judgments that determine our overall goals and purposes. Even when a person is engaged in an activity like pure mathematics we still consider him as a responsible person and not simply as a responsible mathematician. Even though what he is doing is determined by tight logical conditions there is still

room for the notion of personal effort, choice and moral accountability. For these are over and above what the subject itself demands and his degree of understanding within it and are concerned with how the agent as a person conducts himself and evaluates what he is doing in relation to a whole way of life. So we come to the importance of a person as a moral being in relation to those beliefs and values on which the pattern and style of a person's life ultimately depend. In other words, the fact that the person is held responsible as an agent, depends on moral as well as rational criteria. These must now be looked at.

### FOOTNOTES

- 1 See, for example, A.R. White, The Philosophy of Action, (Oxford University Press 1968).
- 2 See G.E.M. Anscombe, Intention, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1957) pp 9-16.
- 3 See C. Taylor, The Explanation of Behaviour, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1964) Chapter III.
- 4 A.I. Melden, Free Action, Studies in Philosophical Psychology, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1961), pp 176-177.
- 5 Ibid., p.179.
- 6 R.S. Peters, The Concept of Motivation, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1958) pp 12-15.
- 7 C. Taylor, op cit., pp 56-57 (footnotes).
- 8 R.S. Peters considers the problems in making this kind of distinction in relation to liberal education, see his article 'Ambiguities in Liberal Education and the Problem of its Content', in Ethics and Educational Policy, ed. Strike K. and Egan K., (Routledge and Kegan Paul 1978).
- 9 A.I. Melden, op.cit., p.32 and pp 171-198.



- 10 R. Chisholm, 'On the Logic of Intentional Action', in Agent Action and Reason, ed. R. Binkley, R. Bronought, A. Maftas, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1971). p.60.
- 11 See, for example, J.W. Meiland, 'Are There Unintentional Actions?', The Philosophical Review LXXII (1963) pp 377-81.
- 12 See, for example, R.W.M. Dias, Jurisprudence, (Butterworth, London, 1964) chapter 10.
- 13 See p.104, pp.166-170.
- 14 M.L.A. Hart, 'The Ascription of Responsibility and Rights', Proceedings of the Aristotlean Society XLIX (1969) pp 171-194.
- 15 C. Taylor, op cit., p.57.
- 16 J. Feinberg, 'Action and Responsibility', in The Philosophy of Action, ed. A.R.White (Oxford University Press 1968) p.104.
- 17 Ibid., p.118.
- 18 G. Pitcher, 'Hart on Action and Responsibility', The Philosophical Review LXIX (1960) p.227.
- 19 D. Davidson, 'Actions, Reasons and Causes', in Journal of Philosophy (1963) pp 685-700.
- 20 Ibid., p.85.
- 21 D. Davidson, 'Agency', in Agent, Action and Reason, ed. R. Binkley, R. Bronaugh, A. Maftas op. cit., p.12.
- 22 D. Davidson, ibid., p.7.
- 23 J. Feinberg, op. cit., p.106.
- 24 D. Davidson, ibid., p.23.
- 25 J. Cornman, 'Agency:- Comments', also in Agent, Action and Reason,

- ed. R. Binkley, R. Bronaugh, A. Marras, op. cit. p.34.
- 26 In other cases like B. Aune's description of the Frightened Burglar (see his comments on the Logic of Intentional Action, pp 71-75 in the book quoted directly above) it turns out to be simply fortuitous that what X causally effected unintentionally and unknowingly is identical to what he had actually intended to do. I cannot see this kind of example presents any problem.
  - 27 H. Frankfurt, 'Freedom of the Will and the Concept of the Person', Journal of Philosophy 14 (1971).
  - 28 C. Taylor, 'What is Human Agency?', in The Self ed. J. Mischel, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1977).
  - 29 What these might be in terms of different sources of value is considered later, see pp.166-170.
  - 30 In terms of the different stages which psychologists like Kohlberg and Piaget have mapped out we would have reached a necessary, but fairly limited stage in our development towards autonomy. See, for example, T. Mischel, Cognitive Development & Epistemology, (Academic Press 1971).
  - 31 C. Taylor, *ibid.*, p.130.
  - 32 S. Benn, 'Freedom, Autonomy and the Concept of a Person', in Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society 1976.
  - 33 R.S. Peters, 'Freedom and the Development of the Free Man', in Educational Judgments (ed.) J. Doyle, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973).
  - 34 S. Benn, op. cit., p.120.
  - 35 S. Benn, *ibid.*, p.126.
  - 36 G.A. Foulds, The Hierarchical Structure of Personal Illness, (London: Academic Press 1976).



- 37 G.A. Foulds, *ibid.*, p.20.
- 38 For further development of these points see R.S. Peters, 'The Development of Reason', in Psychology and Ethical Development, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974).
- 39 C. Taylor , The Explanation of Behaviour, (1964) p.66.
- 40 J. Bennett, Rationality, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1964).
- 41 See D.W. Hamlyn, Experience and the Growth of Understanding, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1978) pp 23-27, and chapter 5, particularly pp 82-83.
- 42 C. Taylor, *ibid.*, pp 66-71
- 43 This is a point well made by E. Telfer in her article 'Autonomy as an Ideal II', in Philosophers Discuss Education, ed. S.C. Brown, (Macmillan Press 1975).
- 44 R.K. Elliott, 'Education, Love of One's Subject and the Love of Truth', in Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education Society of G.B. (1974).

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## CHAPTER SIX: MORAL AGENCY

We have seen that the person is necessarily capable of action and having reasons for his action. This makes the person in a very obvious sense responsible for what he does, at least to the extent to which his actions or consequences of his actions are the outcome of his intentions. In short, it can be said that a person is, by definition, a rational agent.

### 1 CONFUSIONS OVER THE TERM 'MORAL'

Now clearly with regard to many of the person's actions it will be appropriate for him to give reasons which are of a moral kind. On this basis it might be held that the person, at least for some of the time, is necessarily a moral agent as well. But this kind of claim is not easily justified. On commonsense grounds alone it could be argued that it is not difficult to identify those persons who are essentially amoral. They would, for example, be identified by their lack of moral thinking or action. It may be, that certain persons have never thought it necessary, or it simply never occurred to them, to formulate their own moral principles; or they may have engaged in moral discourse arrived at moral decisions, but never acted on them due to some personal weakness on their part. But we would not, for these reasons, discount them as persons, rather we would probably lament the fact that they lacked a morality, or that it had become for them no more than a theoretical exercise. Yet, interestingly, at the same time, the fact remains (which was pointed out earlier) that if they are members of a society and more particularly members of different social groups, they would still be held morally responsible regardless of whether or not they could be said to have moral intentions in either their actions or practical thinking. If their actions transgressed against the moral rules or norms of their society, for example, certain sanctions would be brought against them to bring them back into line. And so it might be argued that in a rather different sense, they could still be described as 'agents' of a moral kind.

To complicate the matter further we could consider the possibility of persons transgressing the moral code of a society, not because they lacked their own morality, but because their values conflicted with those of the society to which they belonged. In this situation the persons concerned could give moral reasons for their actions based on their own evaluations, and so in an important sense, could be described as moral agents; but they may not see why they should be accountable to others who hold different moral values to themselves. Alternatively, there may be those persons who may be described as 'moral' because the acts which they perform do come up to social expectations or reflect values which are held by the society at large; although as far as the persons themselves are concerned they may be totally unaware that their behaviour is construed in this way and may see themselves as authors of their actions under completely different descriptions.

Now all this begins to look very odd, for there appear to be in these situations different and conflicting criteria which are operative in defining the words 'moral' and 'moral agent'. Until these different meanings are sorted out it will just be confusing to consider in what sense a person is a moral being; for it could be, that while it may be impossible to talk of a person necessarily being a moral agent in one sense, this may not be the case in another.

In examining the meaning of morality it will be useful to refer to N. Cooper's article 'Two Concepts of Morality' (1). In this article Cooper distinguishes between positive or social morality on the one hand and autonomous or individual morality on the other. These can be viewed from an external or internal point of view. Social morality can be described anthropologically (i.e. externally) and can also be described and prescribed by someone who is committed to the morality he is describing (i.e. internally). When this commitment comes from an individual's own moral assessment and personal beliefs rather than from fear or habit, it is appropriate to talk of the individual having a morality of his own and the autonomous concept comes into play. Clearly it is this latter concept which philosophers, like Hare, have been concerned with in trying to identify moral judgments in terms of their universality and prescriptivity. Now the point Cooper is



making, is that in trying to explain the nature of moral judgments and actions both concepts are necessary, for if we only employ the concept of social morality then there is no room for showing how moral beliefs can be justified or how moral conflicts between different societies can be resolved. (If, for example, an action is valued by one society but not by another, how can it be decided which society is right?). But if, on the other hand, only the autonomous concept is used, then moral judgments lack both content and authority; to show that an individual's values are both universalisable and prescriptive does not show them to be moral, for the same could be said of other values (e.g. hedonistic, aesthetic and idiosyncratic ones). To evoke the criterion of overridingness does not, in itself, meet the charge of potential egoism, eccentricity and the lack of moral authority gained only from interpersonal agreement. The answer, then, is to use both concepts, but the question remains how is this to be done, while at the same time preserving the objectivity and action guiding function of an agent's moral judgments, which are crucial to any understanding of morality.

## ii RATIONAL CRITERIA OF MORALITY

We could start off by arguing that as a moral agent is necessarily a 'rational' agent, his actions including those delineated 'moral' must (at least in general) fulfil conditions of rationality. Alan Gewirth, for example, has argued on these lines (2). His theory focuses on the Principle of Generic Consistency (PGC) from which he attempts to show that rationality is a crucial criterion in identifying a moral agent. This has been summarised in the following way (3):

(1) All actions have two generic features in common:

- (a) voluntariness
- (b) purposiveness

These necessarily imply the condition of freedom, i.e. the agent's actions are uncoerced and he has control over them (this would rule out animals and infants as moral agents).

- (2) To act according to some purpose is a rational activity, for example, in taking the appropriate means to reach the required end, but more importantly, because acting voluntarily and purposively means there must be a practical commitment to the reasons of logic.
- (3) To be successful in the above is to be a rational agent.
- (4) A normative element is actually present in the 'is' involved in action, because according to Gewirth, having a purpose involves him understanding that purpose as some kind of good. Furthermore, the agent in deliberating between different courses of action and in deciding which is the best way of achieving his purposes, will necessarily use the concept of 'ought'. 'I ought to do x because I want y'.
- (5) The agent, in viewing the purpose of his action as being in some way worthwhile, and in recognising his action is dependent on him being free to act in order that he might achieve his purpose, claims that: 'he has a right to perform his actions and to have freedom and basic well being' (4). In so doing he also claims that others ought not to interfere with its exercise.
- (6) As the agent is essentially rational he is logically committed to generalising or universalising the above with respect to all prospective agents; for he must apply the same reason to them, as he applied to himself. He must accept that they too have a right to freedom and well being they think their purposes will achieve and therefore should not be interfered with, and so the rational agent is committed to the PGC:-  
'apply to your recipients the same generic features of action that you apply to yourself' (5).

Our understanding of what it is to be a moral agent, then, is dependent on our understanding of rational agency. But it cannot just be dependent on this. Gewirth only starts to get warm when he argues that the rational agent must recognise the same right,



which he claims for himself, belongs to all other rational agents.

In a similar way philosophers like Walton have argued that the basis of a moral 'ought' rests on a consideration of the purposes of others and not only of one's own. 'It is the intentions of others,' he says, 'that set a moral limit' (6). But Walton, unlike Gewirth, does not consider that being rational entails the agent adopting the intention of being moral. In fact Gewirth's claim that he has given a complete rational justification of moral behaviour is quite a remarkable one, and one which is not entirely successful, largely because it does not do justice to the autonomy of morality. As H.B. Veatch points out in his review of 'Reason and Morality' (7), one cannot infer from the fact that human beings acting as agents must necessarily value both freedom and well-being, that every human being has a right to them.

Gewirth's attempt at finding a rational justification of morality is all very reminiscent of Kant's categorical imperative. But Kant not only argued that morality was essentially rational and autonomous, but also, that if persons were to act morally they had to respect not only the freedom of other agents, but the moral law itself. In other words, Kant recognised that objectivity was also a crucial criterion of morality. And the validity of this argument still holds, for if moral behaviour depended only on individual evaluations plus the recognition that all agents have the same right to exercise their freedom, moral action would never get off the ground; for as soon as my action, fulfilling my purposes, prevents some other person fulfilling his, we have on the kinds of argument Gewirth has given, both grounds for saying, 'I ought to do x' and 'I ought not to do x'.

Clearly the question of whether I ought to consider my own interests or the interests of others is in itself a question of a higher order. Moral judgments can therefore be described as overriding as well as rational. But even this is not enough; for the individual may hold overriding principles which fulfil the conditions of rationality, but which are based on no more than some personal whim. Objectivity, as a criterion can only be understood if the meaning of morality is given content. The very idea of an individual exercising his own moral autonomy is parasitic on there being choices available to him. He has

therefore to understand what these choices are and the reasons for making them. This presupposes, if not Kant's moral law, at least a social background where there is public agreement on what constitutes worthwhile action and activities. In short the second concept of morality is also required.

### iii SOCIAL CRITERIA OF MORALITY

It has been argued that rationality is a necessary criterion of being a moral agent, but equally necessary is the agent's membership of a human society and this is hardly surprising when rational thinking is itself a social enterprise. It is a point well illustrated by Richard Norman, in his book 'Reasons for Actions' (8), where he argues that while it is always possible for an individual to reject the social values into which he is initiated he cannot reject them all, or there would be nothing on the basis of which he could reject them. However personal an individual's morality may become, the moral principles he holds still rest on public standards of evaluation.

Now, Norman maintains that the individual agent, in coming to understand the meaning of ethical concepts, will have to learn how they are interrelated and how often they underlie not just a moral belief, but a whole way of life. It may therefore not always be possible for him to accept or reject one particular moral value, like honesty, which is connected to so many others, like fairness and respect for persons. But the understanding which an individual gains is not just conceptual, for he must also come to see that moral principles provide reasons for action. It has sometimes been held by other philosophers that this is only possible if reasons are ultimately grounded in wants, for only then are they necessarily connected to action. But, Norman (and R.S. Peters takes a similar position. (9)) argues wants in themselves presuppose rational appraisal, for wanting cannot be identified separately from the reasons for wanting, which point to the objective features of what is wanted and not to a person's psychological disposition. It is therefore true to say that just as a word cannot have a logically private meaning, so a want or action cannot have a logically private meaning. Reasons, Norman claims, ensure rationality not logical certainty and this is all we should hope for'. (10)



But Norman's account does not in itself explain what gives moral decisions or judgments their authority; and the point which must be made here is that social morality, because it is dependent on interpersonal agreement, has a prescriptive force which would be lacking if it was only based on individual judgments. Kant's maxim draws our attention not only to the respect that each moral agent must give to another person's freedom, but to agreement on what constitutes the moral law itself. As rational beings we are all subject to the same moral law, because we are all law-making members in a universal kingdom of ends. But, we might question this degree of universality. For Kant it was a necessary requirement of a moral rule that it should be regarded as applying to all rational beings. However this is clearly unacceptable; for different societies are held together by different moral codes, which, while fulfilling the criterion of overridingness, do not make the same demands on its members and all of whom may not necessarily be joint legislators, but we might still wish to call their codes 'moral' ones. Clearly we still need further criteria to explain what gives a social code its moral authority.

In this connection it will be helpful to look at Strawson's article 'Social Morality and the Individual Ideal' (11). Here, Strawson initially suggests the following as a minimal social interpretation of morality:-

'the fundamental idea is that of a socially sanctioned demand made on an individual in virtue merely of his membership of the society in question or in virtue of a particular position which he occupies within it or a particular relation in which he stands towards members of it' (12).

On this interpretation the universality of moral rules can be maintained by limiting it to a particular social framework. But, Strawson says this is not enough to explain their authority, for there is no reason why members of a society should be joint legislators of its moral law, and if this is the case, why should it hold any moral authority for them? If the only requirement for being a moral agent is social membership, then, those subject to the moral law may not agree with it and indeed be socially exploited because of it. Clearly some other criterion is also required. Strawson suggests that to be subject to

a moral code one must at least have an interest in it. He argues that as the individual can only pursue his aims within a society he must adhere to the socially sanctioned demands made on its members, providing these do protect his interests as well as placing obligations upon him. In other words, as a member of a society pursuing his own goals, he must acknowledge the reciprocal nature of rights and duties. Strawson argues:

'it is not a tautology that anyone subject to moral demands who recognises his interest in the system of demands must also genuinely acknowledge some obligations under the system. But we can argue that it is a tautology that the generality of those subject to moral demands must genuinely recognise some obligations under the system of demands' (13).

Similar arguments have been advanced which also explain the universal in morality in terms of reciprocity of rights and duties within a particular society. K. Baier, for example, argues that being moral is, 'following rules designed to overrule self-interest whenever it is in the interest of everyone alike that everyone should set aside his interest' (14). And D.P. Gauthier takes this a stage further by suggesting that morality is, 'a system of principles such that it is advantageous for everyone if everyone accepts and acts on it, yet acting on the system of principles requires that some persons perform disadvantageous acts' (15).

But the problem with these kinds of theories is that morality is viewed, at least in part, instrumentally; but it must not be viewed in only this way, because even an instrumental account presupposes some notion of the common good which in itself has to be defined and when this is done, when it is established what does constitute the common good, it is still a further question as to whether it has moral worth or not. The whole nature of moral judgments demands, that whatever conventionally might be the case, there must still be room for the question of justification. Morality need not only be seen as a means to an end. Questions concerning what the good life should consist of and what activities men should pursue, while they can only be asked against a particular social background cannot be reduced to it, otherwise there would be no room for talk of moral change, development and criticism.



#### iv THE POINT OF MORALITY

Now, certain attempts have been made by those, like P.Foot, to show that in spite of cultural differences there are certain facts of human existence which are so basic they are bound to determine at least part of what constitutes any idea of human well-being (16). These would include, for example, freedom from injury and the fulfilment of physiological needs. But while certain universal biological and psychological facts must have a bearing on what counts as human harm and benefit they cannot, as philosophers like Norman and Peters have argued, be the basis of morality in any reductionist sense (17). The question of moral justification cannot be reduced to what men happen to want.

Attempts at actually justifying moral values as being universally valid have also been made by using transcendental arguments. It has been argued that values like justice, respect for persons, truth telling can be found in any society of rational agents because of what is involved in persons living together in a social community. Justice, for example, is based on the rational principle that no distinctions can be made without relevant differences and the need in a society for a common action (18); respect for persons on what it is to be a person and the logical connection between this and the appropriate attitude of one person to another (19); and truth telling, because without it the use of language, particularly of an explanatory nature, would be impossible (20).

Although space does not allow discussion of these issues here, what must be said is that whatever the basic moral requirements that might be necessary for the existence of any human society, there is still room for enormous diversity in different social ways of living. It is because the concept of morality is autonomous as well as social that we can talk of individual moral choice. In a society where the good life consists only of maintaining a mere level of survival, scope for individual morality will be limited, while in a society where there is a plurality of moral values, moral choice will be at its maximum. In such a situation, moral decisions, while fulfilling conditions of rationality and social criteria, will also depend, if they are to influence action and

not remain at a theoretical level, on personal and affective considerations (21). While we cannot agree with Hume, for reasons already given (22) that morality is more properly felt than judged, we can agree with him that making moral evaluations is a passionate business. As I argued in the last section, while feeling cannot be separated from rational appraisal it cannot be reduced to it either. This must surely be at least an important factor in explaining diversity in moral attitudes and the seriousness we attach to them, and why moral reasons if not logically impelling are at least psychologically forceful in disposing us to act.

But equally important as moral choice is the idea of consideration for others, not only in a formal sense demanded by us as rational agents, but in a caring emotional sense. An act of kindness carried out for its own sake, rather than from obligation or long term advantage, may be said to have arisen from a truly moral motive as opposed to a prudential or self interested one. Even a society geared to its own survival will be held together by fraternal relationships, kinship and emotional ties which cannot simply be explained in terms of rights and duties. The importance of caring as a criterion of morality is well illustrated by Turnbull's Mountain People, for it is because these people no longer care for each other that we would hesitate to say they had a morality (23). (I shall return to this example presently).

Why we are capable of caring cannot be explained only in terms of our rationality. It might be prudent if we look after each other and rational to respect other persons for having a point of view, but this does not explain human sympathy which Hume recognised as the common experience of humanity. Men are no doubt capable of immense cruelty but it is not just due to rational self interest that they are able to live together and pursue common ends. Certainly morality can be understood in functional terms, as a system of principles and rules which make social co-operation possible, but this cannot provide the whole story, for social activity is always dependent on man's ability to form personal relationships, and these are based on emotional attitudes, and not only on contracts of convenience or unthinking acceptance of roles sanctioned by a society.



v    IS THE PERSON NECESSARILY A MORAL AGENT?

Having considered, if briefly, the many different ways in which the concept of morality might be defined, we can now return to the question of whether a person is necessarily a moral agent, and if so, in what sense.

As an agent, the person must be an evaluator, capable of purposeful and voluntary behaviour even if the choices available to him are limited (for both rational and social reasons). As a rational agent he will be logically committed to universalising or generalising his principles although the principles themselves may have a very specific application. But while some of the values he holds will have overriding importance it is debatable if by this criterion alone they could be described as moral values; if the arguments already given have been at all persuasive they must at least exclude the egoist and the eccentric as being moral agents.

If it is accepted that the social concept is also necessary in defining morality then other criteria must be seen to be fulfilled namely:-

- (1) that those values which are of overriding importance to the agent or agents are also other-regarding;
- (2) that they are in some way dependent on a moral code on which there is public agreement and some form of public sanction;
- (3) they are based, at least in part, on reciprocity of claim (in other words the agent must have an interest safeguarded in the moral code);
- (4) that generally (i.e. this may not be true of individual agents) the morality of a society may be seen to uphold certain values:-
  - (a) because of what is involved by rational agents living together in a social community (e.g. justice and truth telling).

4. (cont.)

- (b) because of what is involved in human beings, living together (as sentient as well as rational beings) bound together by emotional ties, capable of caring for one another (e.g. generosity and self denial).

But in giving these criteria and remembering the last one can only be applied in general terms, we can still remain flexible in our comprehension, of who, and who does not, come under the moral net. There would still be room, for example, for the rebel whose behaviour cannot only be judged against the moral code of the society of which he is a member; the man who acts out of prudence and the man whose behaviour is the result of self denial; the person whose autonomy is limited in that he simply accepts, or has to accept, what is on offer; and for the person who belongs to a society like our own, where it would be a mistake to talk of one moral code and where the opportunity for full moral autonomy is at its greatest; and it must rule out the psychotic, the eccentric and the thorough going egoist. Clearly, given this kind of flexibility most persons, who can be described as rational agents and members of a society, can also be described as moral agents. But this is not necessarily the case; for while the majority of persons must recognise certain moral obligations if a society is to survive it is still possible for particular persons to act solely from personal profit.

However, there is still one sense in which it can be said that a person is necessarily a moral agent. Leaving to one side how a person actually does behave, if he can be described as a rational agent and a member of a society, then, to the extent that his behaviour has an effect on others, and to the extent he has an interest in a society's moral system, he will be held morally responsible for the actions he performs. In this rather narrow sense, all persons including egoists, are necessarily moral agents and their behaviour will be judged against the moral code, sanctioned by the society of which he is a member.

But even this kind of claim might be questioned because it assumes that a society will necessarily have a moral code. I would wish to argue that on the very broad conception of morality I have suggested this is, in fact, the case. For a human society is dependent on social co-operation (even if it is also highly competitive) and is bound to



possess moral concepts to do with rights, obligations, freedom and consideration for others. It is not just that social co-operation is necessary if a society is to survive, rather it actually defines what we mean by 'society'.

However, in a claim of this kind the validity of the second part of the final criterion I gave (4b) may be questioned, because clearly societies can exist which do not possess virtues like compassion, generosity, affection etc. which are associated with the idea of caring for others. Indeed I could no doubt be accused, in suggesting this criterion, of defining morality prescriptively, of giving content to it from the standpoint of certain values which operate only in particular societies. This criticism may to some extent be justified, but it does not alter the more basic and underlying fact that in a society there must be some values which are at least connected with consideration for others even if they are more of a prudential than a self-sacrificial nature. It cannot be a social virtue to be a thorough going egoist.

What then of those persons like the IK? How am I to account for them? For if Turnbull is right in his description of them, he has apparently found a society without a morality. First of all, let us recognise that there are those who would dispute this. C. Battersby for example, believes Turnbull's assessment is incorrect (24). She argues that it is only because the IK's morality does not match up to Turnbull's own moral values, which recognise human beings as ends in themselves, that he wrongly concludes the IK do not have a morality. She suggests that if the meaning of morality is defined non-prescriptively in terms of formal criteria to do with universalizability, overridingness etc. the IK can be said to have a morality after all. While Battersby admits that Turnbull's criteria 'do provide some pragmatically useful guidelines for dividing between the moral and the non-moral' (25), she still considers his criteria to be too restrictive. But to me, her arguments far from showing that the IK have a morality only show the absurdity of using only formal criteria. For if only formal criteria are used everything gets let in; not only does it become difficult to distinguish between different kinds of values (legal, aesthetic, hedonistic) but now, it seems, what most of us would find the complete antipathy of a morality must also be included. And so the term 'moral' ceases to do any work. It seems essential, therefore,

that we retain consideration for others as a criterion of morality.

But to believe this still leaves us with the problem that if it is possible for men to live like the IK, then it looks now as if a society can exist, after all, without a moral code. However, I do not consider this to be the case, for if we examine Turnbull's Mountain People carefully it is a very odd kind of society which he describes. The IK are held together by a common language, the mutual aim of their own personal survival and the vestiges of a common culture, but the same could be said of men on opposite sides in a civil war. In other words even where persons live in close proximity to one another and even where there is social interaction between them, if social co-operation is missing to the degree it is missing with the IK it is simply inappropriate to describe them as a society.

In conclusion, therefore, I would still hold that persons as rational agents and members of a society are morally accountable for their behaviour and because of this, can, in one particular sense, be described as moral agents. But this is not to say it is the most important sense, for it fails to make the distinction between the person who has through reflection arrived at his own moral principles, which may go beyond what is socially required of him, and the one who unthinkingly accepts the moral norms of his time; the man who acts 'morally' but prudentially, and the one who is motivated by selfless ideals (and who may not wish to universalise his principles), and lastly between the person who always acts on his moral beliefs, and the one who never gets passed the stage of deliberating. For all these persons, might for importantly different reasons, be described as moral agents.

#### FOOTNOTES

- 1 N. Cooper, 'Two Concepts of Morality', in The Definition of Morality, ed. Wallace G. & Walker A.D.M., (Methuen & Co. Ltd. 1970) pp 72-90.



- 2 A. Gewirth, 'The Is - Ought Problem Resolved', Proceedings and Addresses of American Philosophical Association, 47 (1973-74) 34-61.
- 3 See S. Cohen, 'Gewirth's Rationalism. Who is a Moral Agent?', in Ethics, (Jan. 1979).
- 4 A. Gewirth, op. cit., p.49.
- 5 S. Cohen, op. cit., p.184.
- 6 K.A. Walton, 'Rational Action' Mind (1967).
- 7 H.B. Veatch, 'Gewirth Alan, Reason and Morality', in Ethics, vol. 89 No.4 (July 1979). p.410.
- 8 R. Norman, Reasons For Actions, A Critique of Utilitarian Rationality, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1971).
- 9 See A.P. Griffiths and R.S. Peters, 'The Autonomy of Prudence', in Mind, Vol. LXXI (1962).
- 10 R. Norman, op. cit., p.82.
- 11 P.F. Strawson, 'Social Morality and Individual Ideal', in Philosophy, (1961) pp 1-17.
- 12 Ibid., p.45.
- 13 Ibid., P.8.
- 14 K. Baier, The Moral Point of View : A Rational Basis of Ethics, (Ithaca, 1958) p.314.
- 15 D.P. Gauthier, 'Morality and Advantage', Philosophical Review, (1967) pp 460-75.
- 16 P. Foot, 'Moral Arguments', Mind, (1958), 6,10.

- 17 R. Norman, op. cit., p.134.
- 18 See S.I. Benn and R.S. Peters, Social Principles and the Democratic State, (London, Allen & Unwin, 1959) Ch. V.
- 19 See, for example, Downie, R.S., Loudfoot, E., Telfer, E., Education and Personal Relationships, (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.) Ch. 6.
- 20 P. Winch, 'Nature and Convention', in Ethics and Action, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1972).
- 21 This point was made earlier see pp.85-88.
- 22 See p.87.
- 23 C. Turnbull, The Mountain People, (London Picador, Pan Books, 1974).
- 24 See C. Battersby, 'Morality and the IK', in Philosophy (April 1978).
- 25 Ibid., p.214.



PART TWO:

EDUCATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSON:



## CHAPTER SEVEN: THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT

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## CHAPTER SEVEN: THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT

Having in part one examined the concept of the person and the essential nature of 'P' predicates, I have now reached the stage where I am in a position to be able to explain and defend the definition of education I put forward in chapter one. To this end I shall now:

(1) in this chapter, analyse the concept of development;

and then:

(2) in the following chapter (chapter eight) explain and defend the meaning of education as: learning which promotes the development of the person qua person.

### i INTRODUCTION

The concept of development is still used frequently in education, particularly in relation to personal development and this is perhaps surprising when it is remembered that the notion has, in the last ten years, come under considerable criticism; for example P.H. Hirst and R.S. Peters in 'The Logic of Education' (1), draw attention to the dangers of taking the meaning of development out of its biological context and using it to refer to human development, where it makes no sense to talk of a pre-existing structure or culminating end state. More recently, G. Langford, in his reply to R.K. Elliott's paper 'Education and Human Being' (2), asserts that it is completely inappropriate to talk of the development of mind unless it is to mean no more than that a person has changed for the better. This, G. Langford argues, is because changes in a person do not occur according to a fixed pattern and in the direction of a pre-determined end, but as a result of a person's ability to learn which is essentially an open-ended affair. The same opinion is shared by P.H. Hirst who agrees that education is better seen as a matter of learning rather than development, if only because the criteria that make understanding understanding are external demands of logic not implicit natural norms (3). Still further support for this position is given by D. Hamlyn, who, in his paper 'The Concept of Development' (4), analyses the difficulties of applying the

concept outside a biological context and from this is able to conclude that 'education has little to do with development except as something which might provide the right conditions, just as physical education provides the right conditions for physical development' (5).

Yet in spite of so much agreement that the concept is singularly unhelpful, and at times positively misleading, it is interesting that philosophers of education are still unable to give it up. For it is not only R. Elliott who refers to education in terms of development, that is, development of the mental powers, (see his article already referred to above), but there are many others who also rely on the concept quite heavily, and at times it is difficult to think of another term in a particular place which would do just as well. We have only to consider that R. Dearden talks of 'the development of autonomy', P. Hirst continues to speak of the 'development of the mind' and that R.S. Peters has described education as the development of persons 'growing awareness', to illustrate this point. No doubt it will be argued by these philosophers, that unlike, for example, the use of the phrase in child-centred literature where there is also frequent reference to 'growth' and 'self-realization', these are not vacuous statements; that they are used meaningfully because, in each case, an account could be given as to what the development would consist of. Nevertheless, they are only meaningful if it is accepted that the concept of development can be applied outside a biological context, and I am not sure, that as yet, an adequate definition has been found to do the job required of it. For it needs to be one that does justice to the fact that our understanding of development extends beyond the world of plants and animals, that its meaning is to some extent universal and does not always change according to the situation in which it is found.

In general discourse the word development is used in many different ways, as the following will illustrate:

- (1) Where development is used simply to refer to a series of changes, for example, the stages of a train journey.
- (2) When the concept is used only additively and refers to an increase of some kind, for example, developing queues, leaks and housing estates.



- (3) When development is used transitively, for example, he developed in his children a love of the countryside, the photographs are being developed, he is developing his powers of reasoning.
- (4) Where there are a series of stages leading to an end state, which are assessed as developmental by the extent to which they come up to the end state or fulfil the criteria it demands, for example, the realization of a plan, becoming a proficient traffic warden.
- (5) Where development means changes for the better, where, because the end state is valued the movement towards it is also valued by the extent to which it comes up to it, for example, to tell someone he is developing as a teacher is to congratulate him.
- (6) Where there are a series of generative changes, that is the changes arise from the nature of the subject of development, and which are dependent on human intention to enable the development to take place, for example, the development of linguistic philosophy, electronic technology, fauvism in art.
- (7) A series of generative changes dependent on a pre-determined process, for example, the development of the fruit fly.

(1) and (2) show us that at the very least development refers to a series of changes and that there is a need for a principle of unity, we need to know what is developing. But these are only extenuated meanings because in each case another word implying a great deal less would have done just as well.

In the examples under (3), development is by someone and is not simply development per se. They do not illustrate the meaning of the concept, unless they can be reinterpreted in terms of enabling the development to take place. Strictly speaking what is developing must in some sense develop itself.

(4) and (5) are dependent on the notion of the end state and are often thought for this reason to be the only legitimate uses outside a biological context. However, I hope to show why this meaning fails to do justice to the generative nature of development, which only becomes evident in (6)

and (7). I would argue that the last two are closer to a central and universal meaning of development. However, there are those who would go further and argue that development is only correctly understood under (7), that is, as a biological concept, instances of which will be causal in nature, predetermined and will involve a sequential set of permanent changes leading to a culminating end state.

## ii NATURAL DEVELOPMENT

The best known account of natural development at least in educational discourse is provided by E. Nagel (6). He analyses the concept in terms of what is potential becoming actual, and in support of this he puts forward the following criteria:

- (1) there is a pre-existing structure;
- (2) the processes of development are sequential and irreversible, but may be assisted by outside agencies;
- (3) there is an end state which is the culmination of the process.

P. Hirst and R.S. Peters have examined these criteria and have shown the difficulties of applying them in any literal way outside a physical environment. It is because of these difficulties that the notion of development has been so discredited when applied to other areas like education. Of course, one could argue (and this has been done) that the meaning of development is different outside a biological content and why should this matter as long as we recognise what those differences are? But unfortunately it does matter, because what tends to happen is that either the meaning of development becomes very loose, so it comes to mean no more than a series of necessary changes, or changes for the better, and the word is no longer doing any special work; or the meaning remains tighter by retaining its connotations with biological development to do with inevitable and predictable causal processes, and then it is likely to mislead us into committing all kinds of naturalistic sins. However, what no-one seems to have bothered to question is whether Nagel's original analysis of biological development was correct in the first place. And I think it can be shown that it was not (at least in



the form that it has been represented in educational literature) and that it is open to objections even when restricted to the context Nagel intended.

(a) E. Nagel's Account and Its Attendant Problems

First of all, the whole notion of what is potential becoming actual can be questioned as an explanation of development, for it is not difficult to envisage situations where it does not mean development. Words written in temporarily invisible ink, the negative of a photograph, the character of Mr. Hyde, the 'dematerialised' space traveller, can all potentially exist and in the right conditions become actualised or energised, but can hardly be said to develop, at least, not in the way the biological organism develops. Much more it seems needs to be said on the nature of the developmental process through which the realization takes place. To describe this process as a series of irreversible and sequential changes may provide us with a necessary criterion, but it is not in itself sufficient to explain development. An ancient tree, for example, also goes through a series of reversible changes as it decays and dies.

Secondly, I have difficulty with the end state, as a criterion of development. It is identified as the culmination of the process, which indeed it is, but this means it is the result of what has already developed and therefore cannot provide a condition for it. It may be that certain sequential stages always do lead to the same end state, but as I shall argue later, it is not for this reason that the changes constitute development.

Thirdly, while a very crucial part of our understanding of biological development is its predetermined nature, I think the role attached to external factors can be greater than Nagel allows for. He suggests external factors only assist the development, they do not play a part in determining the development itself. But surely it is conceivable that outside agencies can do more than allow the nature of the phenomenon to unfold, and that they can actually change the nature of what is developing. While it is undoubtedly predetermined that a biological development takes place it may not be predetermined what the development will be like. Consider, for example, the importance of climatic conditions on the developing landscape or the effects of a drug on a developing embryo. Changes which are determined by outside agencies could even be quite dramatic, but it would still make sense to talk of development providing this phenomenon remains



self generating. In other words subsequent change must still arise from the nature of the organism itself, even if the organism is now somewhat different, otherwise the word development does cease to be inappropriate, if for example the nature of the thing changed only because of what was externally altering it, like a series of continual transplants.

Lastly, I think if development is to be given a general rather than a specifically biological definition, it would be safer to say that the fact the organism's development is predetermined is not in itself a criterion of development, but rather it enables us to assess what is a necessary criterion, namely that the changes arise in some sense from the nature of whatever is developing (see below).

On Nagel's account of biological development the only criterion that seems crucial is the second one, but of course growth is genetically determined but does not in itself constitute development, much more it would seem is required before predetermined changes could be assessed as developmental ones, which, as I shall show, cannot be provided for by the end state (rather we have to give a functional explanation but one where the end state does not provide the means of assessment, rather it is no different from any other stage of a development, in that it can only be understood in terms of the entire biological process).

#### (b) The End State as a Criterion of Biological Development

A more recent and even tighter analysis is given by D. Hamlyn in his article 'The Concept of Development'. He too restricts his analysis to cases of natural development, taking a biological paradigm to explain the concept (8) and he shows the implications this must have for our understanding of development in an educational context.

Hamlyn argues that development cannot simply mean a sequence of changes, not even if one stage is a logically necessary condition for the next. Neither, can it simply be equated with growth, for the development of an organism implies more than mere increase in size; rather, what is required is that its original state must, in some sense, be generative of subsequent ones even if the generation still depends on the satisfaction of other conditions (9). Development is dependent on an organism having the potential for its own development, but actualization only occurs because of an underlying process



which generates the changes and final end state. Hamlyn says:

'it is the inter relationships between pre-existing conditions, necessary sequence and end state within a pattern which we see as natural to a given kind of thing that is important to an understanding of the notion of development.'(10)

Now, the idea of a generative process, of one stage arising out of the one before does seem crucial to our understanding of development and is a different kind of criterion from just saying development is predetermined. However, I would have thought a further distinction needs to be made here, which Hamlyn does not make, between what causes a development and how we recognise development as a development; for the two are not necessarily the same and failure to make this distinction can only lead to confusion. Hamlyn talks of the initial stage being generative of subsequent ones, but in strictly causal terms it would be more accurate to say that it is in the nature of the organism to change in the way it does, that it is a causal process which generates all the stages the organism goes through, including the first. But while biological development is dependent on a causal process, we come to recognise development not by observing or even understanding this process but by watching the changes or effects of that process. It is by observing one stage coming out of the one before that we judge development is both generative and dependent on the internal nature of the organism.

But the confusion arises because we also want to hold that each stage in fact alters the nature of the organism, even to the extent where one might wish to say that what was developing has developed into something else. But if we keep to the causal story, we would have to maintain that its nature had not changed, rather it was in the nature of the organism to change in the way it did. In other words 'nature' is ambiguous and can be defined by internal or external norms. But once this is recognised we can have it both ways: development can be said to both be the result of the organism's nature (internal/genetic) and to change that nature (external/physical).

Development, then, suggests a generative process, but as Hamlyn argues this is not enough, something else is required to distinguish development from mere change in size, brought about by natural growth. He suggests that changes of development have to be seen in functional terms, where each stage of development is recognised as a pattern because of the



contribution it makes to the end state, which in some way must be the rationale of the thing itself (11). This presumably means that development can only be finally explained in terms of the end state and in this way stages of development are recognised in their movement towards it.

If development is to be assessed in terms of the end state, it is easy to see how and why the subject of development could become identified with it. On the kind of functional account Hamlyn suggests, it would surely be correct to say that it is only because of our knowledge of the end state that we know what is developing. While the end state of the organism may not be recognisable until the end, nevertheless this is what can be said to have been developing all along, even though we could not actually see it. If we are able to identify what is developing before the last stage is reached this is only because the stages of its development are familiar to us, not because there is necessarily a similarity between the stages leading up to the end state and the end state itself. In other words, it is not like some human enterprise, for example, the building of a bridge, where each stage in its construction does take us nearer to seeing the finished product, and where the stages of building can be described as functional to this end, and constitutive of it. It is difficult to see, for example, how, in a similar way, it would be possible to say the acorn resembles the oak tree or that the caterpillar can be likened to the butterfly. If, in biological development we hold on to the idea that it is the end state which is developing, then we can only conclude that for most of the time the whole process is hidden from us until the end state is reached or the organism begins to show some resemblance to it. This perhaps explains why the notion of an unfolding or emerging process is often used in the context of development.

But development has a different meaning to emerging or becoming. In these cases, on strictly logical grounds, one does have to know the end state before one can know what is emerging or is in a state of becoming; furthermore, this is all one has to know. Now the same might be thought to apply to development, but while we do talk of developing 'into' we also talk of developing 'as', and the same criteria which are operative in the former are also operative in the latter.

In both instances knowing the subject of 'development' does not enable us to assess whether or not, it is developing. We can identify a subject of



development on the basis of recognising a familiar series of predetermined changes or by knowing what the organism has changed into or became, in terms of gaining new characteristics and therefore a new conceptual identity, but this kind of information is not enough to establish whether what we can identify is the result of development rather than, say, a process of actualization. As we shall see other criteria are necessary before a natural process can be assessed as a development.

Clearly, the subject of development develops through all the different stages of development including the last one, but this does not mean it cannot be seen until the end, rather it suggests there is no reason to identify what is developing with the last stage rather than any other. In fact the identity of what is developing must be over and above the changes it goes through, or at least it cannot be reduced to any particular stage. If the name of the end state is used as a title for the subject of development, this does not mean we have reason to equate the two, but rather, we need to notice that the name refers to two distinct things: it refers not only to the end state, but to the organism itself which goes through all stages of its development including the last one.

In order finally to throw off the myth of the end state, we have only to consider an animal developing for the first time, perhaps as the result of abnormal mutation or experimental breeding. Without a prior understanding of the sequence of changes and end state, biologists could still ascertain a development was taking place. Now, it might be argued, yes, but only when the development was finished, that they could only assess whether the organism was developing by knowing what it eventually became, so that once more the end state is still crucial. But suppose the development did not stop like a creature out of science fiction, it just went on 'developing', at what stage would they look back? Clearly, there would have to be a retrospective judgment at every stage, in that one stage must be seen to be dependent on the one before, and to give rise to subsequent ones, but they would not have to wait until the end to make these judgments, they could make them as the changes occurred.

But, it might still be argued this is not enough, that without recourse to an end state we will have no way of distinguishing development from degeneration. But this is not true. The criteria by which we distinguish



development from degeneration has nothing to do with the end state. In fact if we judge the development against the end state, we are already assuming it is a developed state, and how do we know this, that it is not for example, the first stage in a degenerative process?

The answer to the above will be considered later, in the meantime if we still wish to persist in using the end state as a criterion of development, then we will have to admit to having theistic or anthropomorphic tendencies of thought, that we believe, for example, that nature wanted elephants, cabbages, earthworms and tortoises and then found the way of bringing these about, that until they reach their final stages of development they have not become what nature intended. Alternatively, one may believe in a kind of essentialism: that the organism is not fully itself until the end stage is reached, it is only then that it has become what it is really supposed to be. Without such teleological beliefs as these, it is difficult to see what other reasons there could be which could explain why stages of development should be dependent for their occurrence on that final end state.

However, Hamlyn would argue that one can give a quasi-teleological account. In the article already referred to, he agrees with Charles Taylor's explanation of natural behaviour, where it can be accounted for 'by laws in terms of which an event occurring is held to be dependent on that events being required for some end' (12). In other words if it was not required for that end, it would not occur. Moreover Hamlyn says:

'there is no necessity that what is so explained should be explained more fundamentally perhaps, in terms of pre-existent causes also though nothing logically rules out that possibility either'. (13)

But there is every necessity why what is to be explained (that is development) must rest on a more fundamental explanation. Strong arguments have been put forward to show that a functional explanation cannot be fundamental in the way that is supposed by those holding on to a quasi-teleological account of development.

For example Susan Khin Zaw, in her reply to Dr. Boden's paper, 'The Case for a Cognitive Biology' (14) argues that the series of physical events, which is the production of a particular creature can be given a causal explanation, which can stand independently of any kind of functional



analysis. If a functional explanation is given, it is at best a possible explanation and is dependent on what is causally the case if it is to be scientifically true. The causal story is therefore explanatorily fundamental. Presumably in the case of living organisms, they are as they are because of an evolutionary process, dependent on such considerations as, natural selection, chance factors of the environment and random mutations. Genetic coding being the result not only of change but the functional viability of the physical realization of any particular coding.

(c) The Use of Cognitive Concepts in Biological Development

In view of all this we might wonder why biologists talk in functional terms at all, and indeed attempts have been made to show that while this may have been legitimate before Darwin's theory of evolution when the idea of a Grand Design was acceptable, now, the language of causation and evolution eliminates the need for functional statements (15). But, notwithstanding, biologists continue to defend functional explanation as being essential to biology, and it is not difficult to see why, because, without such explanation, biology is reduced to physics and chemistry. For example it has been said:

'A sequence of events within the organism is not understood merely when that sequence has been fully described in terms of biochemistry or physical chemistry.' Understanding that sequence may require as well knowing what function it serves (16).

And:

'If we omit the functional description of what goes on in the organism and confine ourselves to the physical description, we have failed to understand the organism (we may have achieved biochemical or physical understanding) but we have not achieved biological understanding.' (17)

But while the need for functional language is still recognised if biology is to survive as an explanatory science, it is now generally accepted that a meaning of 'function' has to be found which is free from any reference to the purposes of a creator or designer. This means a functional explanation cannot just be in terms of or for the sake of the end state. If it was confined to the latter it would remain teleological in the strict sense and be open to those criticisms I have already made. In fact, functional analysis looks at every stage, not least at those stages in embryological development.



Dr. Boden in the article already referred to, says:

'the main theoretical aim in developmental biology is to find ways of expressing the overall integration that characterises the developmental process. How is it possible for the different organs to arise from a single cell or homogeneous mass of cells? How can they be placed in the correct positions relative to one another? and how can they be induced to develop in parallel so that they do not get out of step with one another?' (18)

The answers to these kinds of question Boden says will only come from biological understanding, achieved through the use of cognitive concepts but without mentalistic implications. She talks of 'pattern regulations', 'control systems', 'negative and positive feed back', 'choice sets', 'generative rules'. She even goes so far as to say that something is significant for a given system if it has both 'specific meaning for the system and that it has a potential for contributing to the systems' goals or interests.' (19)

She quotes Goodwin who sees the natural world as full of meaning. For example, he describes:

'evolution as an intelligent system that tests hypotheses and provides evidence of learning; the embryo he likens to a mind and the organism he describes as a cognitive system, adapting and evolving on the basis of knowledge about itself and its environment. The dynamical modes of the organism's behaviour are represented as manifestations of co-operative or collective activity among cognitive units, development being seen as the orderly unfolding of these modes within a structurally stable, knowledge using system.' (20)

Apparently, there is no danger in these kinds of descriptions given above of taking them literally, of thinking that organisms could possess knowledge, or evolution can test hypotheses like human minds are capable of doing. This way of talking is just a useful metaphor, less likely to mislead than cognitive concepts used in psychological discourse. It is, after all to be based on what is physically the case; it is a causal process which makes the functioning of the organism possible, even if different functions can be realized in physically different ways.

But, as Zaw effectively argues there is a danger if the functional explanation is thought to be of a fundamental kind, if descriptions like the above are thought to provide the reasons why biochemical processes occur,



for the sake of bringing these ends about. The organism then becomes essentially a knowledge user, 'an intelligent system', a creative idea', rather than a series of physical events. And there must be the tendency for biologists to do this, because they cannot accept a physical or causal description as being fundamental, which would reduce the organism to being no more than a series of physical changes and biology to physics and chemistry. This, then is the crux of the problem. How can the organism be defined without reducing it to physical matter, and by drawing on a notion of function which is not so dependent on metaphor as to be misleading, which is not based, for example, on the artifact model which has already been shown to be inadequate and misleading?

Khin Zaw suggests that most analyses of natural function in the end depend on the function of survival and reproduction (21), these are the defining characteristics of a living organism. How these functions are fulfilled will vary from one organism to another and will enable us to identify a particular organism or species. Without this knowledge we could not identify the subject of development. To recognise a series of changes in physical or biochemical terms does not, itself, enable us to identify an organism or the development of a particular organism. It is not sufficient that we know a series of changes is genetically determined to enable us to describe a development, for changes are assessed as developmental ones on other grounds than their origin.

What is also required is that they are seen to fulfil normative criteria as well.

First of all, it has to be accepted that the overall purpose of the organism is survival and the continuation of the species and that how this is achieved will depend on the intricate and unique system of a particular organism. Secondly, under this description changes will have to show evidence of the organism as a developing system, to the extent that the changes can be seen to form a pattern. And thirdly this pattern must be susceptible to assessment in cognitive terms, for example as an 'integrating system', as 'the realization of generative rules', dependent on 'choice sets' and 'developmental constraints'. Dr. Boden suggests:

'developmental choices guiding cell differentiation and organ growth have to be made continually, and while each of these leave some

options open for later discussion within the developmental process, other potential options are progressively outlawed.'(22)

(d) Summary

To summarize, I have tried to argue that an understanding of development, even within a biological context, is normative and dependent on cognitive concepts for its assessment. It is the overall integration of a given system for the purpose of its survival that characterises the developmental process. It is not enough to ascertain that a series of changes the organism undergoes are predetermined; if an organism is able to change colour or shape, although these have internal causes, they are not necessarily a part of the developmental process. Growth only counts as development if it can be seen in relation to an overall pattern of synchronised change. Stages of development are recognised as such because they bring about the creation and maintenance of a network of related functions, to enable the organism to do certain things necessary for its identity as well as for its survival and reproduction.

In abnormal development, while the above condition has been achieved in that the organism is able to function, it does not do it very well and is therefore unlikely to communicate the information, that makes its existence possible, to the next generation. A biological monster can develop, but it is unlikely to reoccur. If it does, a new development is established for its way of functioning has been tested and has been found, after all, to be adequate.

The functionalist account, but freed from reference to a final end state as an end state, is, then, necessary for an understanding of development. It is this which provides the rationale that enables the organism to be identified (as an organism and as a particular one) and enables its development to be assessed. But one might wish to argue that the empirical usefulness of this analysis, is dependent on taking a functional description as fundamental, and has it not been successfully argued that it is at best only a possible explanation? and dependent on the causal story which remains explanatorily fundamental. Fortunately for me, for the purpose of my thesis, I do not have to answer this kind of question. It remains a problem for the biologist to solve. All I wish to show is



that development as a concept (regardless of the scientific mileage that can or cannot be gained from it) is, contrary to what is usually thought, dependent not only on criteria taken from the natural world, but on criteria which are taken from the world of human activities, artifacts and symbolic meaning. According to Goodwin one might put it, that 'the embryo is more a sculptor, the brain more a composer of music, both being very fine artists.'(23)

### iii NON-NATURAL DEVELOPMENT

It is often thought outside a biological context, because development is no longer causally predetermined, but is the result of human intention, its meaning can only be metaphorical, and that it is therefore likely to be misleading or limited in its significance. But as we have already discovered, even in biological development changes are actually assessed as developmental ones, not on grounds of their origin, but on the basis of external norms. These presuppose a functional explanation which is only meaningful because of our prior understanding of a social world of human activity, purpose and intention. In other words a functional explanation presupposes a conception of development which is more at home in a non-natural context. We have therefore just as good reason to say biological development is being used metaphorically, as the other way around. As both criteria are necessary (but not jointly sufficient) one could conclude that in biological development, while the criterion which states the changes must arise from the nature of the subject of development belongs naturally to it, the criterion which refers to the means of assessing it does not, and, that this is conversely true in non-natural development.

#### (a) The Use of The End State as a Criterion of Non-Biological Development

Previous analyses tended to work from the assumption that biological development provided the paradigm and that the most that could be hoped for in other contexts was a much looser meaning, to do with a series of changes leading to an end state. The end state was seen to be crucial. Stages could be assessed as part of the development by the extent to which they fulfilled or came up to the criteria it demanded.

I have already argued that in a biological context development is not dependent on the idea of an end state, and to think it does presupposes



teleological or essentialist assumptions. But in non-natural development, which is initiated by human intention, it might be argued that stages of development could be correctly said to occur for a purpose and this could be legitimately construed in terms of the end state. One could argue that now it is a sufficient explanation of their occurrence that they are required for a further end. Furthermore, stages of development could, in some cases, be said to become constitutive of this end. For example, stages in the construction of a town could be described in this way. On this account, then, it could be argued with some justification that in non-biological development the means of identifying and assessing what is developing could lie with the end state.

But the problem with this account is that as it stands the idea of a generative process is entirely missing. A series of stages could after all contribute directly to some final state of affairs without us wishing to say there had been a development. The stages of putting on a theatrical production or executing a plan could have been described in this manner without us wishing to say either the production or the plan had developed, we may only wish they had. There is a significant difference between describing the construction of a new town and the development of an old one. Where changes are simply the realization of a pre-conceived project or are logically necessary in a strict sense as in a deductive argument, there is simply no room to talk of development. Moreover, we do talk about development even when no end state exists, or is likely to, when the process is still ongoing and there is no sign of an end being reached. This might be the case for example, in diplomatic negotiations, space technology, women's fashions, hang gliding and philosophy, unless, that is, the end state is defined as loosely as where they all happen to be now, and in some cases it is difficult to imagine how even this could be delineated.

While human intention does not, as some have thought, rule development out, it cannot provide the only story. While non-natural development depends on personal or social action, nevertheless what is developing must in some sense be described as developing itself, even if an agent or agents are responsible for that development.

This is only another way of saying that the idea of a generative process is crucial to any understanding of development. Development which is



the result of human intention is therefore only possible because the nature of its subject matter allows for the possibility of its own development. It is this which makes a series of changes possible, where one stage arises out of the one before and gives rise to subsequent change. These can then be seen as a part of an overall order or pattern, the relationships between the changes which take place being an intrinsic one. It is this pattern which enables us to identify the nature of the development, which could not have been known beforehand by knowing what a person intended. The end state therefore cannot dictate what the stages of development are going to be; if, as an intended outcome it does, then it would be better to describe the series of changes as realization, progression, construction or improvement, rather than development.

This also means that where we can talk of development, intention cannot be linked to bringing about a specific state of affairs. For example, without human curiosity and man's capacity for purposeful action, science would never have developed, but human intentions did not specify what science was or is to become, because these lie in the nature of science itself. The present stage of any specific field within science is the result of what has gone before it, it is the outcome of what has already developed and this includes the criteria for testing its truth value.

#### (b) How Non-Natural Development is Assessed

The only way the end state might be rescued as a criterion of development would be if it could be shown that it provides the means of assessing the development. It could be argued that we can only assess if a development has taken place after it has finished.

But if we hold on to the idea of development being generative, then it is difficult to see why the end state, which has been thrown up by what has gone before should have the final authority, rather than being in the same position as any other stage subject to assessment. The same point could be made that was made with regard to biological development, how do we know that what we consider to be the end state of a development is not the first stage of a degenerative process?

A similar point, I feel, is made by Ray Elliott in his reply to Hamlyn's paper, which has already been referred to (see p143 ) for Elliott also

believes that one can talk of development where there is intention, providing the subject of development can be said to develop itself. He suggests with regard to the development of the mental powers that the structure of developed understanding reflects that of primitive understanding, as the structure of a mature human body reflects that of the embryo (24). In other words, to put this in more general terms earlier stages of development must be reflected in later ones. In relation to the end state, Elliott argues that in development of this kind it would be more appropriate to use the notion of 'possibility' rather than 'potentiality' because in the latter we will be tempted to provide 'a full specification of the relevant actuality'; he says:

'there is therefore the danger that attention will be drawn almost exclusively to the end state which then provides the criteria for assessment and in so doing stands above evaluation and criticism.' (25)

On the end state account it is therefore difficult to see how a distinction can be made between development and degeneration, we can say that we disapprove of what has developed, but this is not the same as describing it as degeneration, rather we are saying that we wish whatever has developed had not done so. Because on the end state account, one can only identify the subject of development because of what it becomes, (and as we can therefore only do this at the end of the development) we cannot describe it as degeneration simply because we dislike its face. All we can do is to hope it might start to degenerate.

The only other possibility of holding on to the end state would be to give up the idea of a generative process, so that where the end state was approved of, stages leading up to it would be called a development, and where it was disapproved of, stages leading up to it would be called degeneration. But if this is all that is meant why talk of development at all? If a neighbour kept building a wall in front of our living room window would we, when he eventually finished, call this a development if we approved of it and a degeneration if we did not?

It is difficult to think of any good reason for deciding in favour of the end state especially as it has already been found wanting in biological development. In fact it will be helpful at this point to remind ourselves of the basis on which the distinction was made in biological development.



It will be recalled that in order to assess the development of the living organism we needed to understand how it functioned as a system that was capable of survival and reproduction, it was this which provided the underlying rationale. Now, in a similar way what I wish to suggest is that in non-biological development we also need to know the underlying rationale, only this time it will be provided by purpose or point of the action or activity, the principles that govern it and the methods it employs. But (as with biological development) while the rationale enables the development to be assessed, it does not tell us what the end state is going to be, in fact it does not tell us what any stage is going to be. It would be quite possible for the different developments to have the same rationale. Consider the different ways methods of agriculture have developed or the different forms and character democratic governments have taken. But the rationale does provide the means of assessment, it is this which enables us to see that the changes contribute to, rather than destroy what is developing, by the extent to which the rationale is fulfilled rather than undermined. This point is best illustrated by examples:

- (1) The rationale behind state schools is to educate the young. This being the case some would argue that comprehensive schools, being instruments of education, could be rightly described as a development from the previously existing grammar and secondary modern and technical schools. But it could also be held that the rationale behind comprehensive schools is not simply to provide education but to provide equal education, this being the case they would be better described as a reaction against rather than a development from the older system.
- (2) In recent times there has been a tremendous proliferation of different denominations of the Christian Church in the U.S.A.. These, in spite of their differences, could still be described as developments of the one religion, providing the same Christian beliefs and ethics (that is, the rationale) are essentially the same and if the work of any one denomination can be said to uphold and promote them in a way that contributes to the life of Christianity. Clearly Roman Catholics may well not wish to describe any branch of protestantism as developments but rather simply as different forms of Christianity.

- (3) The techniques used in olympic gymnastics can rightly be said to have developed if each change of technique can be seen to be an adaptation or to have arisen from what has gone before and if they are increasingly successful in achieving their objective, that is, if the movements become more skilful and more graceful.
- (4) Any area of knowledge or of understanding which can be said to have an underlying rationale, characterised by a complex and articulated network of concepts which sets up criteria of meaning and justification, can be said to have the possibility of its own development. In this instance we would need to know the principles and methods employed and not just the purpose behind the area of knowledge to understand its rationale (faith healing and modern medicine may have the same purpose but not the same rationale). Development of this kind will depend on the logical structure of the form of thought or mode of experience in question. In most cases it is a structure which is not simply hierarchical. This is because while the meaning of concepts is inter-related it does not normally involve a strict logical order. Our experiences are certainly structured conceptually and in a variety of ways, but conceptual structures are better envisaged as rambling old buildings than narrow apartment blocks with no lifts. It is simply not possible within any given area to map out a fixed route of development. Forms of thought and modes of experience develop and continue to develop multifariously, as this happens their structures become increasingly differentiated. Furthermore it need never be appropriate to talk of a final end point in their development. Certainly there are significant turning points and points of arrival but they are not necessarily culminating or final. It is in the nature of different subject areas that they endlessly open up new possibilities in developing man's awareness and understanding of the world he lives in. To some extent it is only by looking back at the history of some area of knowledge that we can see how knowledge itself has developed. Not only do changes gradually alter the nature of our understanding (changes in scientific thought alter scientific method, changes in the style of art alter our concept of art), but in some cases the *raison d'etre* actually changes altogether, for example, when psychology developed from philosophy.



Now, in the above, although in each case the rationale enables us to identify the development and makes its assessment possible, it does not in itself tell us what the development would be like. For example, it would have been impossible to have predicted the form that any one Christian denomination would have taken or what a Ludmila Turischeva or Nelli Kim would come to achieve on the beam and asymmetric bars or where the path of knowledge might have led. Often in development of this kind it is just when the outcome is unknown and unpredictable that it seems appropriate to talk of development. When something is not totally in our control, where we talk of something making its own demands, or where we have to be sensitive to what we are creating we may say 'we shall have to wait and see how it develops'. In other words there has to be the possibility of development even though it is the result of human intention. Putting a plan into operation or following a recipe cannot be said to develop if it simply involves following specifications or instructions to the letter (like painting by numbers). But we can talk of the development of a story, of a town or of a relationship; of developments in diplomatic negotiations or in writing a poem. In these kind of instances it can make sense to talk of development. From the outset it may at least be possible to ascertain a principle of unity provided by the intention behind an activity or situation, although this may not be sufficient to provide an underlying rationale. For example, although it might have been enough to know diplomats in negotiation wanted reconciliation, it would not have helped to know that the poet intended to write a poem.

Now in all these examples, although the development is seen in retrospect, this does not have to mean the development is only recognised after the development is finished, but rather (as with biological development) a pattern emerges, as the changes occur, the nature of what is developing is recognised, and changing stages are seen as constitutive of that development. We might notice for example that a story 'unfolds', that what used to be a few shops has become a town centre, that the stages of getting to know someone have taken on 'a life of their own', that in diplomatic negotiations a solution is 'emerging' and that in the writing of a poem one part of it 'suggests' the next and the poem starts to write itself.

Although outside a biological context development is invariably unpredictable, this does not have to be the case. Where a development has already taken



place, for example developing an understanding in mathematics, there it is possible to recognise and assess another instance of the same development and of course the stages then will be predictable, just as they are in familiar cases of natural development. But these stages must already have been judged as a pattern of development rather than simply as a set of sequential stages leading to an end state.

In each of the above the changes can be said to contribute to, rather than to destroy the nature of what is developing, because the rationale is fulfilled or upheld. But when it is undermined the opposite takes place, for example, art degenerates when it no longer uplifts the soul but is used merely for sensual gratification; diplomatic negotiations start to deteriorate when the underlying purpose of appeasement and reconciliation are replaced by provocation and division; democracy degenerates if the criteria it demands are no longer fulfilled (for example, if changes prevented freedom of speech); a marriage carries the seed of its own destruction when loving care and companionship are eroded by indifference and contempt; history degenerates if the use of propaganda destroys its truth value.

Sometimes a development is described even when the rationale is altered, when what is developing can rightly be said to have developed into something else. In this case, it is not that the rationale has been undermined or destroyed, but that it is superseded by a new rationale which, while to some extent fulfilling the old criteria also sets up new ones. This means that although the new development gains a different identity and a different means of assessment, it will still be compatible with what it has developed from. On this basis, although in each case the rationale has indeed changed, nevertheless psychology could be said to have developed from philosophy, lawn tennis from royal tennis, electronics from our knowledge of electricity. But if the criteria changed entirely even at the most general level they could not be correctly described as developments. The theory of evolution, Paul's conversion, the age of the Renaissance, the French revolution - we could not describe these as developments because they were a reaction against or in opposition to existing beliefs or the recognised order of things.

In assessing development it has to be made clear what the development is in and this will sometimes depend on whether the rationale is given a wide



or narrow base. A development in chemistry counts as a development in science but not necessarily the other way round; we may wish to say someone is developing as a portrait artist but only as that kind of artist; or as a classroom teacher, but not simply as a teacher; or as a prime minister but not necessarily as a statesman and so on. It is easy to see that the rationale could become too broad so that it would become impossible to describe the subject of development in any precise way; and that also it could become too narrow so what is developing is always in effect developing into something else.

(c) Is Development an Evaluative Notion?

It is often thought that because development is normative it is also evaluative. In other words when we say something is developing we are commending it. But this is not necessarily the case; we can say something is developing well without approving or disapproving of it. We can assess developments in modern architecture without passing judgment on its value. If we do question the worth of a development we are not questioning that it is a development. Indeed if we assess it negatively we may wish that a degenerative process would set in (no doubt people felt like this at the time of the German occupation).

However, it is only if we value what the development is in that we will necessarily value its development. This would only have a bearing on actually assessing the development, that is in deciding whether what is happening is a development if we are talking about something prefixed by the word 'good' or where it is already an evaluative notion, i.e. value judgments are already written into its meaning (for example, education may be thought of in this way). This is because, in order to decide whether the changes are fulfilling the criteria demanded by the rationale and contributing to the nature of the development, we would have to pass evaluative judgments that could be controversial. But it is not the notion of development that would be problematic but what the development is in. If, for example, it is difficult to assess whether something counts as a good piece of music or a good novel if opinions differ, the problems lie with the criteria of good music or novel, not with the criteria of development. It may therefore be easy to show that punk rock is a development of popular music, but it may be much more difficult to show it as a development of good popular music.

(d) Conclusion

The rationale must allow for the possibility of development. The purpose of dealing cards, whisking an egg, reciting mathematical tables, sewing on a button does not allow or create the demand for development, unlike the rationale of playing bridge, the art of cooking, mathematics and furniture design.

It is because of the rationale that it can be said to be in the nature of a given activity to develop. But this does not mean it is pre-existing or causally determined, rather its nature is created as the development takes place. By fulfilling the criteria the rationale demands, each stage contributes to the development and makes it what it is, but is also a result of what has already been created and therefore new changes can be said to be generated from previous ones (that is from the nature of the development itself).

It is not enough to show that in a development one passes through a series of necessary stages but rather these stages must be seen to be constitutive of what the development is in. It is logically necessary in learning to create poetry that one learns linguistic concepts but the latter is not a stage of poetry development. It is empirically impossible to ice skate before one can walk but walking is not a stage in developing as an ice skater. Similarly according to psychological research carried out by J. Piaget, B. Inhelder and others (26), in order to think formally one has to first think concretely but this does not mean concrete thinking constitutes a developmental stage of formal thinking (Hamlyn makes a similar point in the article already referred to, see p.31 ). But it might be claimed and indeed it has been claimed that both are a part of cognitive development. It must therefore be shown that the nature of cognitive development is something over and above concrete and formal thought of which they were both a constitutive part. As far as I can see this could only be provided by an area of knowledge, the nature of which could provide the means of identifying what the development was in and of assessing it as a development as opposed to a series of necessary stages.



#### iv SUMMARY

I have argued:

- (1) that biological development is dependent on a functional description, where a developmental process is characterised in terms of the overall integration of a given system for the purposes of reproduction and survival; and that this is true even if the functional description does not provide an explanation of a scientifically fundamental kind;
- (2) that the end state is not a necessary criterion of development in either a natural or non-natural context;
- (3) that the difference between biological and non-biological is not as great as is commonly supposed; that while the criterion concerning its origin belongs naturally to the world of plants and animals, the one concerning its assessment comes from the world of human activity and symbolic meaning;
- (4) that it is quite possible to put forward a universal meaning of development which does justice to both contexts. This I have suggested would have to fulfil the following criteria:
  - (a) there is a principle of unity;
  - (b) there is a series of intrinsically related changes, where one stage arises from previous stages and gives rise to subsequent change, because of the internal nature of what the development is in;
  - (c) that there is an underlying rationale which enables the development to be assessed as a development;
- (5) that if the changes in a development changed its nature entirely, a new set of criteria would come into play and it would gain a new identity (it would therefore be a different development);
- (6) that development is a normative but not necessarily an evaluative notion.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 P.H. Hirst and R.S. Peters, The Logic of Education, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970) Chapter 3.
- 2 G. Langford, 'Education and Human Being II', in Philosophers Discuss Education, ed. S.C. Brown (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd. 1975).
- 3 P.H. Hirst, 'Chairmans Remarks', in S.C. Brown, op. cit..
- 4 D.W. Hamlyn, 'The Concept of Development', in Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education. Society of G.B., Vol. 1 (1975).
- 5 Ibid., p.38.
- 6 E. Nagel, 'Determinism and Development', in The Concept of Development, ed. D.B. Harris (University of Minnesota Press 1957).
- 7 P.H. Hirst and R.S. Peters, op. cit..
- 8 D.W. Hamlyn, op. cit. p.26.
- 9 Ibid., p.33.
- 10 Ibid., p.33.
- 11 Ibid., p.32.
- 12 Ibid., p.34.
- 13 Ibid., p.34.
- 14 M.A. Boden and S. Khin Zaw, 'The Case for a Cognitive Biology', in The Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Sup. Vol. (July 1980).
- 15 See A.R. Manser, 'Function and Explanation', in Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society (July 1973) pp 46-52.



- 16 S. Khin Zaw, op. cit., p.59.
- 17 Ibid., p.59.
- 18 M.A. Boden, op. cit., p.29.
- 19 Ibid., p.38.
- 20 B.C. Goodwin, Analytical Physiology of Cells and Developing Organisms, (Academic Press, 1976) p.vi.
- 21 S. Khin Zaw, op. cit., p.64.
- 22 M.A. Boden, op. cit., p.33.
- 23 B.C. Goodwin, 'Embryogenesis and Cognition', in Cybernetics and Bionics, ed. W.D. Keidel et.al. (Oldenbourg, 1974) p.47.
- 24 R.K. Elliott, 'The Concept of Development - A Reply to Professor Hamlyn', in Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education Society of G.B. Vol. X (1975) p.44.
- 25 Ibid., p.47.
- 26 See J. Piaget and B. Inhelder, The Psychology of the Child (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1966).

is to be a person, that is, as:

- (1) a centre of human experience, where 'human' gives a social rather than physiological explanation and which is characterised by being both: (a) conceptually structured, and (b) affectively sensitized.
- (2) a rational agent, where 'rationality' presupposes the capacity for evaluation and linguistic understanding and not only purposeful behaviour.
- (3) a moral agent, where the meaning of moral as a defining characteristic of the person may have to be limited to 'being morally responsible' or 'morally accountable to others' and will depend on the assumption that persons are necessarily social beings.

We must now, therefore, consider what would constitute the development of the person under these descriptive terms. Descriptions, which I have already argued, underline the essential nature of 'p' predicates, and which have, therefore, universal application.

## ii THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSON AS A CENTRE OF EXPERIENCE

As a person's experiences are characterised by being conceptually structured and affectively sensitized it may be thought that the development of the person as a centre of experience must involve him in one long series of passing through different logical or mental states during which his understanding of the world would increase. But this would fall down on two counts. Firstly, development as already defined, involves more than a series of dependent stages, there must also be an underlying rationale responsible for these stages. Secondly, man's conceptual and affective awareness is not global, it is highly articulated. Man has made sense of his environment in a variety of ways and this is reflected in different forms of thought and modes of experience. It is these which provide the rationale that is needed to make the changes in a person's conceptual understanding and affective experience count as development.



**CHAPTER EIGHT: EDUCATION AS LEARNING WHICH PROMOTES  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSON QUA PERSON**

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## CHAPTER EIGHT: EDUCATION AS LEARNING WHICH PROMOTES THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSON QUA PERSON

Having in the previous chapter examined the concept of development, it is now possible to:

- (1) explain what might be meant by the development of the person qua person;
- (2) defend the meaning of education I have given as learning which contributes to the development of the person qua person.

### A. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSON QUA PERSON

#### i INTRODUCTION

In terms of the criteria of development that have been given, there is no problem in talking about the physical development of the person, this can be explained straightforwardly enough in causal terms, as a predetermined and generative process assessed by the use of functional criteria of the kind applicable to the development of any living organism. But the development of the person qua person can only be explained in terms of intention and not in those of causal necessity; to believe this is to hold a particular view of man as a free agent as opposed to one whose actions and beliefs are unalterably determined.

What the development of a person might consist of can only be understood in a public world, but because the development of the person is not simply dependent on what is potential becoming actualized, but is a result of learning, the directions in which a person could develop will therefore necessarily be social ones and the nature of any direction will vary enormously depending on the particular 'world' he has experienced. But his development qua person will be assessed, as with any development, because of an underlying rationale, but, which this time does not depend on functional or social criteria (which could be applicable to an organism or an activity respectively) but on the defining characteristics of what it



It only makes sense to refer to a person's conceptual development in terms of different conceptual schemes and not by referring to a general process of increasing understanding. A person learns to discriminate, think critically, make assessments only within a particular context. A person could, for example, go through a series of mental changes in mastering an order of historical facts. It could be appreciated that the meaning of one fact was necessary for the understanding of subsequent ones, but these changes would not in themselves constitute development, unless it could also be shown that they reflected an increasing understanding in the nature and logic of actually doing history.

In any case, it could be argued that a person's thinking only changes significantly when a certain level of understanding occurs and not necessarily because he has mastered a large body of facts. Changes that reflect an increasing mastery in a given area will give us grounds for describing them as development. There may be no one logical order in stages of development but given that an area becomes more complicated, there must be an order and it must make sense to talk of its development. This is not only true of what could be described as areas of knowledge, but also of what has been referred to as modes of experience, concerning aesthetic, religious and moral values. These, too, involve initiation and the need for mastery. It may not be appropriate to talk here of a logical order, but given that each mode of experience has an underlying rationale and is characterised by the person gaining an increased and differentiated understanding as initiation goes on, one can talk legitimately of stages of development (indeed in the case of moral experience, psychologists have done just this).

It may be objected at this stage that what is now being referred to is not the development of the person per se, but only his development in, for example, geography, current affairs or music. But to say this would be to miss the point. A person's conceptual awareness is dependent on what he knows and what he has come to experience and this by its very nature is structured in different ways. But this does not mean that a person cannot bring to bear on a particular situation his understanding based on many different modes of thought or experience. More importantly, it must not be forgotten that the principle of unity is provided by the person himself. What is decisive in assessing development is not only dependent



on specific criteria of the form of thought or mode of experience in question, but the degree to which a person is changed by it. In the last analysis, development depends not only on the nature of conceptual understanding but on the nature of the person himself. Certainly, the understanding and expertise the person gains must come up to certain standards demanded by a particular subject area, but to count as development this understanding must actually change the person's conceptual nature or outlook. In other words it affects his expectations and general awareness of the world. It also makes subsequent change possible to the extent that it leads to new knowledge and to new experiences, although this is not to say that these will not also involve further learning.

But even to leave the matter there would be to operate with an entirely passive model of education, it would be to forget the person is an agent as well as a centre of experience. One can have knowledge without it providing a disposition to act, it therefore does not necessarily lead to development in terms of our agency. If we remember the person is also characterised by being an evaluator, it must be just as important to consider what a person comes to value as well as what he comes to know. What his values might be will obviously depend on the society of which he is a member, as well as on the objective assessments he is able to make, but they will also depend on how a person affectively experiences the knowledge and understanding he gains.

In the previous section I argued that feeling and sensitivity are as characteristic of the person as his rationality (1). Yet the two cannot be divorced, the experience of emotion is dependent on acts of cognition and cannot be separated from them. Education of the emotions can, therefore, be said to depend to a large extent on enabling children to make the right appraisal based on true beliefs according to the situation they find themselves in (2). But at the same time, I also argued, the meaning of emotion cannot be reduced to acts of cognition. To say that emotions are conceptually based, that they are dependent for their identity on how we assess a situation, does not commit us to saying they are only a form of rational appraisal. The personal experience of having feelings must remain central to any understanding of emotion, even if they are logically inseparable from the appraisal which is made at the time.



The capacity for feeling and sensitivity is therefore as important to the person's emotional development as his ability to appraise a situation correctly, not least because of its motivational effect. Indeed, many of the activities a person may be initiated into demand an emotional response on his part, so that true understanding of the activity is impossible without this. This seems to be the case, for example, in those areas which reflect aesthetic, religious or moral values. But even where learning is concerned only with empirical truth, emotional engagement may still be necessary, that is, if the person is going to come to value what he is learning for its own sake, if he is going to do more than go through the motions as it were, with understanding, but without personal commitment. And where a society allows, there is always room for diversity and individual choice; development therefore depends on contingent factors as well as logical ones.

But there are other considerations; a person develops as a rational agent as well as a centre of experience, and this may well limit what affective experiences are open to him, if he is to develop qua person under this description as well. These must now be looked at.

### iii THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSON AS A RATIONAL AGENT

A person is distinguished by his ability to: (a) think rationally, (b) to use reason in initiating action.

(a) This has largely been explained already because it is dependent on the conceptual understanding a person has. But one can say conversely that this understanding is only possible because he has the capacity to reason. There are therefore prima facie grounds for saying that the development of the person's conceptual understanding must be based on what is thought to be true and rationally defensible. And if it is argued that many concepts that are understood do not fall under this category, it does not alter the importance of a person being able to make distinctions between true and false propositions, valid and invalid arguments and matters of fact from those of fantasy or opinion. Furthermore, if he is recognised as a rational agent, then he will be respected as a source of thought and

argument. There is a sense in which a person must make up his own mind, although this is not to say he could do it in any way he wished.

It follows from what has been said that if a person is a rational agent, then, it is not always open to him to develop in any form of conceptual or affective experience that he may encounter. A person may change because of what he learns to believe or because of personal experiences but this does not mean he has developed qua person. For this to be possible justice must be done to the fact that he has to fulfil conditions of rationality. This means, with regard to the affective side of our natures, that to the extent to which emotional experience is based on rational appraisal, development of the person will depend on his ability to correctly assess a situation, to remain objective, to be discriminating, realistic and free from prejudice.

But (as I have just argued in the previous section) affective experience cannot be reduced to acts of cognition, it therefore still makes sense to talk of a rational agent developing through emotional experience and this does not only mean he can think rationally, make realistic assessments and has control over his feelings. Indeed, there is plenty of room on this account, for the development of the person as a centre of experience in different situations, areas and activities that are not distinguished by their degree of rationality.

(b) As a self-determining agent, a person is able to formulate his own ends and take the necessary means to achieve them, he is also capable of choosing between different ends and giving reasons for doing so. The extent to which this is possible is dependent on the alternatives known and available to him. There will always be practical limitations in terms of the nature of a society, the social groups to which the person belongs and the moral obligations he must carry. Furthermore, his capacity to realise the ends he chooses will depend in some cases on his technical competence and physical skills, as well as his ability to reason.

A person's actions are not isolated events; they are based on his ability to form rules and to live by them, they can therefore be seen as a pattern reflecting a whole way of life. It will be remembered from chapter five in part one, I used Taylor's argument that while the person cannot be distinguished from the higher primates because he has first order desires,



he can be distinguished by his capacity to have second order ones (3). In other words persons can evaluate their desires and this means they are capable of self-evaluation to the extent that they can identify themselves with those desires. It will also be recalled that a person is characterised by his ability to make qualitative evaluations, to justify his choice of action by the giving of reasons (4). It is therefore possible for the agent to see the stronger desire is not necessarily the better one.

While a person is necessarily a free agent, one that is capable of choice, the extent of that choice may be limited. A person's decisions may never be made independently of what is socially expected of him, so that while he is author of his own action he is slave to convention. This may not only be because of the limitations of what is 'on offer' in the society in which he lives, even where choice is at its maximum a person may never reach a decision independently of what is socially expected of him. In Benn's terms, he may have achieved autarchy without achieving autonomy (5). This may mean a person's development as a self-determining agent will be assessed by the extent to which the person can aspire towards this ideal, within the physical and social limitations he finds himself in. For example, that he can think for himself, make critical appraisals, reach his own decisions; formulate his own personal values and change them in the light of experience and that, finally, he is able to act on them.

But there are, as we have also seen, other considerations. Whether or not a person exhibits his agency in his thinking or his actions, if it is to count towards a person's development it must be seen to fulfil criteria not only concerned with autonomy, but rationality as well. To develop qua rational agent, it is not enough to become increasingly autonomous. To have a mind and opinions of one's own and even to act on them, counts for very little, if, at the same time, our beliefs are false, our reasons inconsistent, our opinions biased and our evaluations made uncritically. In fact, in some situations while there will always be room for individual judgment there may be no room for original thought, judgment or even choice. It is for these kinds of reasons autonomy cannot, on its own, be an educational ideal (6).

Finally, the person's development as a rational agent, does not happen on its own, but within a society held together by mutual purposes and common codes of conduct. This means a person's use of practical reason is very much a moral matter.



iv THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSON  
AS A MORAL AGENT .

As a rational agent, a man is held responsible for what he believes to be true or valid and can therefore be asked to give an account of the evidence as reasons for his beliefs; as a moral agent, a person is held responsible for his actions in a social world where his behaviour has a direct bearing on others. While it may not be possible (for the reasons which have already been given (7)) to say the person is necessarily a moral agent in an autonomous or altruistic sense, nevertheless, as a rational agent living in a society, then, as I argued earlier (8), to the extent that his behaviour has an effect on others, and to the extent he has an interest in the society's moral system, he will be held morally responsible for the actions he performs.

But it might be questioned whether this gives enough scope to talk of the person developing morally, that is, as a necessary aspect of his development. In other words, it is difficult to know how far one can go without becoming prescriptive. Perhaps, the most one can say is that persons, as members of society, will at least reach what Kohlberg has referred to as the 'good boy' or conventional stages of morality even if he does not reach the level of internalising and universalising his own moral principles.

However, if, as I argued in chapter six, our understanding of morality also involves some sense of caring for each other, then it is doubtful as to whether these stages can, on their own, be described as moral development, rather than as just necessary pre-conditions, to which one might add the ability of the person to form relationships with other persons (which is a necessary pre-condition having knowledge and understanding of others as well as moral understanding). R.S. Peters in an article 'The Place of Kohlberg's Theory in Moral Education' (9) looks at the possibility of supplementing Kohlberg's account by the work of Hoffman, Peever and Sécord to provide a developmental account of concern for others. Certainly this must be worth exploring if it is accepted that the kind of attitude we develop towards our fellow beings is as crucial to our understanding of moral development as the more formal and rational considerations that Piaget and Kohlberg make so much of.



## v CONCLUSION

If the notion of development is to be used in the way it was earlier defined, then what is meant by the development of the person must mean more than that he has changed, even if the changes are thought to be for the better or that the stages he can be said to go through contribute directly to a recognisable end state. What must be shown is that the criteria which have been given can be directly applied to what it is to be a person, these are, namely:

- (a) there is a principle of unity;
- (b) there is a series of intrinsically related changes where one stage arises from previous stages and gives rise to subsequent change, because of the internal nature of what the development is in;
- (c) there is an underlying rationale which enables the development to be assessed as a development.

Now the development of the person qua person can be shown to fulfil these criteria in the following way:

- (a) the principle of unity: this is provided by the person himself;
- (b) series of intrinsically related changes: this criterion is fulfilled in two main ways:

1. As a centre of experience the person will, through learning, necessarily go through a series of intrinsically related changes in gaining conceptual and affective understanding in different areas of knowledge and in various modes of experience open to him. These, by virtue of their complex and structured nature and the standards they demand, enable the changes in a person to count as development and to make subsequent understanding possible. It is because the person's understanding changes, it can be said that further development arises from the subject of development, that is the person himself.

2. As a rational and moral agent a person can change in terms of: his ability to deliberate between courses of action, to make decisions, to effect change in the world and how he conducts his personal life and his life in relation to others. As an evaluator, a person can be

said to develop not only because of a greater knowledge of the alternatives open to him, but also because of the extent to which he comes to value some or all of these alternatives whether for intrinsic or instrumental reasons (although some of them must be for intrinsic ones). choose between them and turn them into action and where his motivation will depend on affective as well as rational considerations.

To say that changes under this description arise from the nature of the person would be to point to certain dispositions, for example, moral sensitivity, personal abilities, practical know-how, his awareness of the situation he finds himself in and most important of all his strength of character to carry out what he chooses or is obliged to do.

(c) The underlying rationale: if changes in the person are to count as development they must fulfil the underlying rationale of what it is to be a person, that is, a centre of human experience and a rational and moral agent. This means, in relation to the first criterion, that learning which results in no more than a behavioural or physiological response cannot count as development qua person; and that, with regard to the second, changes in a person's actions and lifestyle cannot just be the result of personality or causal change or because of what the person undergoes, rather, they must, at least in part, be based on personal thinking, reflection, deliberation and decision. Furthermore, this increasing ability to evaluate, if it is to count as development, must fulfil criteria of rationality, for example, to do with impartiality, relevance, freedom from error, cogency and consistency.

## B. CAN LEARNING WHICH PROMOTES THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSON QUA PERSON BE DEFENDED AS A DEFINITION OR NECESSARY TRUTH OF EDUCATION?

### i INTRODUCTION

It will be remembered that in part one, chapter one, I argued that giving a definition admits of degrees and that there can only be a guarantee of universal agreement at the first stage where underlying conditions are given, after that, it necessarily becomes contestable (10). I also suggested that, in the past, philosophers of education have paid insufficient attention



to this fact and have often put forward contestable definitions as if they were giving underlying conditions or very basic criteria of education, and that this is one reason why they have been accused of writing in value judgments, even of smuggling in their own preferred ideologies, under the guise of conceptual analysis. As a result of this there is now a danger that evaluative definitions given by philosophers will be discredited and that they, in their turn, will tend to only look at other, related concepts, like learning or concern themselves with analysing how concepts of education happen to operate in common usage. However, I think the validity of giving definitions of an evaluative kind can be rescued if it can be accepted that:

- (1) education as a concept admits of degrees, and at a certain level because of its evaluative complex and open-ended nature, it necessarily becomes an essentially contestable concept;
- (2) that definitions which prescribe particular values are therefore contestable and must prove their worth against other definitions put forward by other contestants, whose validity they must acknowledge;
- (3) these definitions, while they are prescriptive, are not arbitrary and can be justified by reference to the preconditions of education where there is agreement;
- (4) following on from (3) that definitions of this kind provide a half way house between the preconditions from which they are developed and from which they gain their validity, and the stipulation of aims for which they can provide a launching pad and a justification;
- (5) in order to fulfil the above role, evaluative definitions will have to be initially open-ended in character, in that, while they will emphasise certain criteria as being definitive of the 'true' nature of education, they must still leave room, at this half way stage, before the stipulation of aims, as to how these criteria might be realised in substantive terms. In other words we could define education as the realization of the person without specifying the entire nature or character of the person to be realised, or we could talk about education

as initiation into worthwhile activities but leave it open as to the content of these activities, or we may put forward the development of knowledge and understanding as a definition of education but without specifying what this knowledge should consist of, at least that would be a further question;

- (6) certain definitions which are both evaluative and prescriptive, but which are put forward as being incontestable, can be justifiably ruled out.

I would hope that the definition I have given can be seen to fulfil the above criteria. For I would recognise that in suggesting education is to do with 'learning which promotes the development of the person qua person', I am stating more than the underlying conditions, and that as a definition it has now reached the second stage where it must be defended as being essentially contestable. This means, first of all, it must be shown to be a valid and genuine definition, where the values it presupposes and champions can be both justified and applauded; and, secondly, it must be defended against other definitions where, while I would acknowledge their validity, I would question the priority they give to other educational values.

## ii A VALID AND GENUINE DEFINITION

I have already analysed the actual notion of the development of the person qua person and defended it as meaningful. It should, therefore, be clear by now what I understand by it, that I do not mean, for example, that to talk of the person developing is to suggest that he is just becoming more and more of a person or is progressing towards some predetermined end state. But what may still be questioned is, why 'learning which promotes the development of the person qua person' has to be accepted as an important necessary truth of education? And I should now like to answer this in the following ways:

First of all it must logically be true that education is only concerned with learning which presupposes the value of the person, that is as a centre of experience and self-determining agent in the ways already



described. The definition I have given can, therefore, rightly be said to be drawn from the preconditions on which there is necessarily agreement.

Secondly, given the way the concept of development has been defined, it will be remembered that if we value what the development is in, we will necessarily value its development. We are, therefore, committed in education, where the value of the person is presupposed, to valuing the development of those characteristics that are definitive of the person.

Thirdly, the idea of education as 'learning which promotes the development of the person qua person', does full justice to the way education has been contrasted to training, where education is no longer seen in relation to learning specific subject matter or as preparation for an occupation or the fulfilment of a particular social role, but where its value is seen to the extent that learning actually changes the person qua person, for example, in terms of his beliefs, attitudes and dispositions to behave.

Fourthly, as a definition it is non-stipulative, because the conditions that have to be fulfilled do not prevent it from being open-ended in its application. In other words, while not any change in a person's outlook or behaviour will count as his development qua person, nevertheless, there are a multitude of ways he could develop and still develop as a person; what these might be will depend to a large extent on the social world of which he is a member as well as the person's idiosyncratic nature. It is difficult to see, therefore, how I can be accused of smuggling in my own personal prejudices about what the content of education ought to consist of. On the other hand, I have tried to show that however much social scope we allow for, if education presupposes the value of the person, then, there are certain criteria that have to be fulfilled and these must apply universally.

Fifthly, while advocating that learning to have educational value must hinge on the concept of the person, I have emphasised throughout that the person's existence and development qua person is dependent on him being a member of a human society. I would not, therefore,



now deny that certain social criteria have to be fulfilled as well; for example, that education is concerned with initiating the young into what is considered to be socially worthwhile, and also with what is necessary for the functioning and maintenance of a particular society, only that these could not stand on their own. There is always a danger with any account labelled 'the development of the person', or with similar labels, like 'self realization', 'education of the whole man', that it will be assumed that they are promoting values to do with individualism and are, therefore, open to the criticism that the values they imply (concerning, for example, self fulfilment or the pursuit of personal excellence) are socially relative ones, operating only in particular cultures, like our own and not, for example, in certain communist states, and cannot be defended as necessary universal truths of education.

But I do not believe my account has to meet this charge, for what I have said is quite compatible with a society which emphasises fraternal values, the importance of group activity and collective responsibility of mutual achievement and the sharing of personal experience, which may attach little, if any, importance to individual self-fulfilment, and may even deny the person's development as a unique individual for the sake of the common good. But what I do not recognise is that education can take place where members are only seen in functional terms, where they are 'educated' only to fulfil a particular role or roles, in order to uphold the functioning of a society, and where no, or very little, account at all is taken of members of society as persons, that is as unique centres of human consciousness and as self-determining agents.

If education as a term is used to refer to learning which makes social membership of a depersonalized nature possible and ensures the continuation of a society, but not the development of the person qua person, then I would say that this is an entirely different concept and, therefore, does not have to be contested against. Of course, if one was to ask the overriding question as to whether this kind of learning achievement is not better than the one that presupposes the value of the person, then the answer must be found by looking to the underlying purpose for the existence of any human society. For if society becomes something other than the human beings which make it up, if it is thought that the consciousness of each person does not matter, then the society is no longer serving the purpose for which it was created.



All this is not to say that persons cannot be treated as social cogs, only that if they become educated this will be in spite of and not because of this fact. For to deny the value of the person is to deny the value of education.

### iii A DEFENCE AGAINST OTHER CONTESTANTS

#### (a) Other Accounts that rely on the Idea of Development or Similar Notions For Example: Self Realization

I have already suggested that other accounts may have fallen into the trap of not being able to justify the values which they presupposed. At one time the all round development of the individual (for example, physical, intellectual, moral, emotional, spiritual) was very popular. By taking the concept of development as it is normally used in a natural context, they were able to describe the development of the person as the unfolding of inner potentialities, assigning education to the role of an outside agency assisting the development and playing a somewhat negative role in the process by 'allowing' the development to take place and 'nurturing' where necessary. By taking development to be a natural process they failed to see the need to justify the values they assumed in the directions they specified. The same problem arises for those who try and justify education in terms of self-realization; because as, for example, Elizabeth Telfer has argued in her article, 'Education and Self Realization' (11), the self to be realized or fulfilled, unlike the nature of a biological organism, is always an ideal self. It, therefore, assumes certain values, for example the importance of a balanced self (all round development), a higher self (development of particular talents, intellectual and moral development), an autonomous self (the development of the ability to evaluate and to choose). These accounts also show their dependence on a concept of development that relies heavily on a culminating end state.

It is because of this consistent belief that the concept of development belongs only in natural context that it is thought that it can only be used in other situations either inappropriately or at best metaphorically; and that it continues to be criticised as a way of describing and evaluating education. For example, in 'Philosophers Discuss Education', G. Langford maintains that the use of the term 'development' in relation to education is simply



inappropriate, for it suggests, he says:

'that change occurs according to a fixed pattern and in the direction of a predetermined end. This may be true of the changes which occur in plant and animal bodies. People, on the other hand, possess the ability to learn; moreover in contrast with most other animals, their ability to learn is open ended; they can learn to do, and learn about an almost infinite variety of things.' (12)

And Langford is not alone in this, P.Hirst and D. Hamlyn hold similar views (13).

The argument, then, still runs that education is to do with learning, not development. It is only by sticking to the former, so it is said, that our attention will not be drawn away from the fact that education presupposes public standards, common understanding, social content and all the rest of it. Apparently we can never develop through learning, but only through what is physically predetermined, which means the only development open to us as human beings is biological development. This then has the absurd effect of ruling out mental 'development', as a development, which must in part be biologically predetermined, because clearly, it is also the result of learning as well. It seems the two have to be kept separate, when it would be much more honest to say that usually we refer to the one and the same development, assessed not in physical terms in a laboratory, but in terms of the child's understanding and mental abilities in a classroom or other places of learning, which nevertheless we believe to be brought about by natural causes as well as through learning. If we are not prepared to say this then either we have to stop talking of mental changes and talk instead of physical ones, which would have to be described in real and not just pseudo-physiological terms; or we shall have to deny that mental changes, like the child 'coming' to speak, are biologically predetermined; or we shall have to be prepared to allow the development to be a non-biological one, although it has natural causes. What we cannot do, however, is to describe mental changes as if they were only physical ones and which is a constant danger in psychology.

I hope I have already effectively shown that the concept of development is not restricted in its application to cases of natural development and that it can be used just as legitimately in other contexts because the criteria of development apply universally. The use of development is, therefore,



quite valid in contexts where certain value judgments are operative either, explicitly or implicitly, providing, of course, they are recognised and are not just put forward under the guise of natural development (that is, only as the result of a natural process).

It is perhaps because this distinction was not fully recognised when the concept of development was used in the past, that it has now become so discredited. Another reason, which is well illustrated by Langford in the quotation given above, must be that development is often thought to refer to an end state and is, therefore, judged to be inappropriate to use in relation to education, which is open ended. As R.S. Peters once said to become educated is not to have arrived but to travel with a different view. But as I have argued there is no reason why development has to be understood in terms of an end state, development can be open-ended, on-going and still be assessed as a development (14). I would conclude there is, therefore, no reason why learning should not be assessed in developmental terms.

Now, to talk of education only in terms of learning is to be open to the charge that what comes under education can be not only trivial and arbitrary, but undynamic as well, in that it need make no difference to the person in terms of his attitudes, long term interests and dispositions to behave. In short, he could learn a tremendous amount without it changing the way he thinks, makes decisions, conducts his life, or even how he sees and experiences the world he lives in. And this is because these depend not only on what he learns but how he comes to value what he learns. In other words, it does not necessarily lead to his development qua person. Any account of education must allow for the person as a self-determining agent not only in terms of his ability and willingness to learn and to understand but, also as an agent that lives and effects change in the world.

#### (b) The Development of Autonomy as an Alternative Model

It might be thought that the kind of case I am trying to make has already been done by those who advocate the value of autonomy as an educational ideal. But I do not think it has. It may, depending on how autonomy is defined, be a part of what is involved in developing as a person, the reason being, as we saw earlier in chapter two, autonomy admits of degrees,



so while it can refer to as little as the person's ability to make rules for himself, it can suggest as much as the person's developed and extensive capacity for authentic and independent judgment and activity. But as I have already argued, if autonomy is accepted as a part of what the development of the person involves it must be balanced with the fact that we live in a social world, where there are always limitations of an intellectual and practical kind. This means that while it is always appropriate in the definitive sense to talk of the person as a self-determining agent it can be misleading to talk of the person as a self-governing one, whether in his judgments or actions, that is, if the former implies he can make up his own mind in any way he likes, and the latter suggests he can act independently, without restraint of any kind and without considering the effects of his actions on others. I shall look at these in turn.

Firstly, given that our judgments need content and that the nature of this must depend on what is socially available to us, then our judgments must to some extent be socially determined. For example, trying to decide what political party to vote for is dependent on what parties exist and what they stand for; even where an individual's judgment leads him to taking a highly critical and original position which is independent of anything on offer, it is still parasitic on those values where there is already some kind of agreement and on which he can exercise his critical powers. He cannot just make political evaluations in a social vacuum. More specifically, there is the point that Telfer makes, that the person cannot, having considered the views of a particular case just choose what opinion to hold, for having reflected on the evidence he may have no alternative but to accept a certain conclusion (15). In short, all this must mean that while the ability to think and act independently is central to the meaning of autonomy, in terms of the development of the person qua rational agent, there are always other criteria to bear in mind (16). As Dearden says, while autonomy centrally involves independent judgment what counts is 'judgment of what and according to what criteria' (17).

Secondly, there are always inner and outer restraints which put practical limitations on our capacity as autonomous agents (18). These may depend on the fact that our wants and desires, at least of a first order, are more often given than a result of rational reflection (for example, as I argued in chapter two, our evaluations often depend on our affective response to a



situation as well as our ability to make rational appraisals although as we have seen the two cannot be separated (19)). Even where our wants may be said to be truly the result of our own but objective assessment, most of us (apart that is from the existensialists amongst us) believe that we just have to accept that there are always restraints, for example, of a cultural, psychological, financial or moral nature which make the idea of complete freedom of thought and action an impossible one and which means autonomy as an ideal must always be qualified.

Finally, it can be said that those who advocate the value of autonomy in education usually rule out persons like slaves and true believers (20) but there is no reason why these persons should not develop as self-determining agents in terms of their capacity for thought and conceptual understanding. Conversely, I can see no reason why a person cannot be autonomous in both the authentic and intellectual senses, in that his motives are genuine and because he always weighs up to the alternatives before deciding what is the correct judgment to make or action to take, but in spite of being underdeveloped in what he knows, understands and has affectively experienced.

(c) Models of Education that emphasise either the Development of Knowledge and Understanding or Initiation into Worthwhile Activities

In describing education in terms of the development of knowledge and understanding or initiation into worthwhile activities there is a real danger that education is then conceived as a state of being rather than doing. On these accounts it could be enough to show the educated person had been initiated, if, when asked, he could exhibit his skill and understanding, even his capacity for original thought, even though he may have no personal inclination towards any of these things. In other words, education has given him understanding but not the disposition to think, it has provided him with, for example, intellectual capacities and physical abilities, but with no inclination to put them into practice.

By defining education as learning which promotes the development of the person qua person, I have drawn attention to values to do with the person not only as a centre of experience but an active agent effecting change in the world, and I do not therefore believe the meaning of education can just depend on criteria to do with knowledge and understanding or initiation

into worthwhile activities; for what the person knows and understands and is capable of doing is one thing, and whether the person uses his knowledge, values his understanding, exercises his capacities is another. What I am suggesting, is just as we would not call a person moral simply because he had moral understanding but never behaved morally, so I want to champion the cause for only calling persons educated where it changes them qua persons and that means not only as centres of experience but also as agents who make value judgments and live in a practical world of action.

On the account I have given, then, the man who receives an 'education' but spends all his time lying in the sun, and that is all he does (he is not for example appreciating the scenery, planning next week's events, solving a mathematical problem in his head or practising yoga), would be ruled out.

At this point I would recognise that what I have said is at its most contestable but in its defence I would gladly continue to pit it against other accounts that, to me, are just as contestable. For example, where education is seen only as a second order activity, or where knowledge and understanding is sufficient to characterise the educated man but where there is no personal commitment, or where education is seen as the development of certain capacities but not inclinations, where there is always a logical gap between being educated and letting that education change one's life as a human being.

#### FOOTNOTES

- 1 See pp. 79-88.
- 2 See, for example, R.S. Peters, 'The Education of the Emotions', in Education and the Development of Reason, ed. R.F. Dearden, P.H. Hirst and R.S. Peters, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972).
- 3 See pp. 106-107.
- 4 See pp. 106-109.



- 5 See p.108.
- 6 See E. Telfer's article, 'Autonomy As An Educational Ideal II', in Philosophers Discuss Education, ed. S.C. Brown (Unwin Brothers Ltd., 1975).
- 7 See pp.130-133.
- 8 See p.133.
- 9 R.S. Peters, 'The Place of Kohlberg's Theory in Moral Education', Journal of Moral Education Vol. 7 No.3.
- 10 See pp.23-27.
- 11 E. Telfer, 'Education and Self Realization', in Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain Vol. VI No.2 (1972).
- 12 G. Langford, 'Education and Human Being II', in Philosophers Discuss Education, ed. S.C. Brown (Macmillan 1975) p.76.
- 13 See P. Hirst, 'Chairman's Remarks', also in Philosophers Discuss Education, p.91, and D. Hamlyn, 'The Concept of Development' in Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education Society Vol. 1. (1975).
- 14 See pp.152-160.
- 15 See E. Telfer, 'Autonomy As An Educational Ideal II', also in Philosophers Discuss Education, p.21.
- 16 Ibid., pp.21-24.
- 17 R.F. Dearden, 'Autonomy As An Educational Ideal I', also in Philosophers Discuss Education, p.18.
- 18 See earlier discussion pp.107-109.
- 19 See pp.79-85.

- 20 See J.P. White, Towards a Compulsory Curriculum (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973) pp.79-82.



PART THREE:

PHYSICAL EDUCATION: THE CONCEPT AND ITS JUSTIFICATION



CHAPTER NINE: DEFINING THE SUBJECT MATTER (1):  
PHYSICAL EDUCATION, SPORT AND THE VALUE  
OF PHYSICAL SKILL

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CHAPTER NINE: DEFINING THE SUBJECT MATTER(1)  
PHYSICAL EDUCATION, SPORT AND THE VALUE  
OF PHYSICAL SKILL

i INTRODUCTION

In parts one and two, I examined the concept of education as an essentially contestable one, and put forward and defended a particular definition of education, namely as: 'learning which promotes the development of the person qua person'. Now, on the basis of this definition, I wish to look at the concept of physical education and to consider whether, contrary to what is often felt, the use of this term (as opposed to say, physical training, which is conceptually straightforward) is justified.

But before considering whether physical education can justify its name, and this would have to be on the grounds already indicated, namely, that it could be shown to make a substantial contribution to learning which would promote the development of the person qua person, we need to be able to identify our subject matter. The next two chapters will therefore be devoted to this task. For this purpose it would be sensible to imagine we have put the term physical education in inverted commas or given it another name, so we can examine the conceptual nature of our subject without begging the question of whether it does or does not have educational value.

Increasingly, it would seem that as a profession we are coming to hold the opinion that 'physical education' is not a unified concept. Indeed, it is often described as an umbrella term where the activities which are found to come under it are there only as the result of historical accident or development, having little in common with each other and certainly not enough to justify seeing them all as aspects of one concept. D. Best, for example, in his article 'Physical Education and the Aesthetic', suggests that the search for the specifically physical education element in the respective activities is a wild goose chase (1). He says that those, like Carlisle, who have gone on such a search did so only because of their belief that where there is a single term such as 'physical education', which is used to refer to a variety of activities, there must be some common underlying essence which justifies our using the same term of each. It



is this kind of essential presupposition, Best suggests, which prevented Carlisle from seriously considering the possibility that there is no unifying concept (2).

However, there are those in the profession (presumably those without essentialist preconceptions), who have not been prevented from seriously considering the possibility, but who have, unfortunately, come to the conclusion that physical education is indeed impossible to define. (They have even welcomed this conclusion because it lets us out of the knotty question of its justification.) Harry Maudsley, for one, says that the vast collection of activities that come under the term are held together by little more than gross movements of the body. In his article 'Physical Education - An Obituary', he argues that physical education is dead and one of the main reasons for this is that it has proved impossible to define (3). He thinks that the subject has still to be buried but once it is, we will have in its place: dance, sport and outdoor pursuits. Furthermore, Maudsley suggests that, 'this will be a relief for those who attempted in vain to justify a place in education for such a diverse and ambiguous concept' (4).

Now, it is of the first importance for us to see if this kind of attitude is justified, not least for our future on the school curriculum, for one of the reasons why sporting activities, dance and outdoor pursuits have been a compulsory part of the school curriculum for so long is because, along with their health value, they were believed to be aspects of a child's physical education. If we now dispense with the term we are still left with the problem of justifying those same activities, the problem will not go away just because we have given them different names.

However, I have yet to be persuaded that the task of defining physical education as a unified concept is an impossible one, I believe there is every justification for seeing those activities which can be found in a programme of physical education as falling into one conceptual group. I believe the reason why this has been thought to be a 'non-starter', 'a wild goose chase', is because firstly we have lacked a theory of physical education and secondly because the business of defining it has got muddled with the question of its justification. Because of its title physical education, it was assumed that it must be shown even in the task of defining it that it does have educational value. Presumably in the same sort of way that it is

thought necessary to show generally that what is described as education does indeed have educational value. But the term 'physical education' unlike 'education' does have a subject matter, the conceptual nature of which could, as I have suggested, be considered under a different title altogether if necessary, where the question of its educational value need not arise. In this way the task would be similar to looking at what we meant by music to find out if this was a unified concept, before considering how we might justify music education.

As evidence for my observation that this kind of distinction has not been made between the question of definition and the question of justification, consider Carlisle's attempt at justifying physical education. His thesis (the value of which in terms of its contribution to our understanding the nature of physical education never seems to me to be fully appreciated) was based on the belief that there had to be a link-up between what could be found to be peculiar to all P.E. activities and the way they were justified. He thought it was only what could be found to be common and essential to all aspects of physical education that would also be what would justify them. But, clearly, there is no reason why one P.E. activity has to be educationally valuable in the same way as any other, and certainly there is no reason to assume that this will have to be based on what could be found to be common to them all. (I am not saying that it may not turn out that what they have in common may be at least in part what gives them educational value only that it does not have to be the case.)

Now, it is unquestionably true that the character of P.E. activities is extremely diverse and what is recognised as the most important aspect of one activity is not the most important aspect of another. Best, for example, in criticising Carlisle's attempt to justify physical education aesthetically, says that where Carlisle went wrong was in ignoring major differences between the activities and in assuming that there was one peculiar aesthetic element (5). For while it may be possible to show that the aesthetic element could be found in all P.E. activities it could never be thought to be the most important element in any but a few. But the fact that Carlisle pinpointed the aesthetic as the peculiar P.E. element did not show that he was on a wild goose chase in looking for what might be common to them all, but rather that he picked on the wrong thing, not just because, clearly, it is not the most important aspect of all P.E. activities but also because it was not (with the notable exception of dance and certain sporting activities like gymnastics) definitive of them.



However, Best, as we have seen, suggests that the whole idea of looking for the essential P.E. element is misconceived. He says:

'it is the result of supposing that no aspect of P.E. is really an aspect of P.E. or is characteristic of P.E. unless it is peculiar to P.E.. This is as if one were to insist that a ginger cake could be fully characterised and only be characterised by saying it contained ginger. Yet although ginger is the peculiar ingredient in ginger cakes as contrasted with other kinds of cake, no cake can be made entirely of ginger and the other ingredients are also used in other kinds of cake' (6).

Now while this criticism may be valid if it is applied to an account like Carlisle's, because he emphasised the aesthetic element in P.E. activities to the exclusion of everything else (although incidentally he never considered the aesthetic element was peculiar to physical education he did recognise it was to be found elsewhere) there is absolutely no reason why, in looking for what is common to all P.E. activities, one should consider that once it is found one then has a complete picture of every aspect of physical education. One can accept that P.E. activities like the ginger cake are not fully characterised simply by giving common criteria but still to acknowledge the importance of doing this. After all, it is the ginger which enables us to distinguish between the ginger cake and all other kinds of cake, what is it that enables us to distinguish P.E. activities from all other kinds of activities? All right, it certainly is not the aesthetic element, but this just means we have to look again, and to look eventually in terms of a theory of physical education which would do justice to those distinctive values which are inherent in P.E. activities when they are actively engaged in. And we can do this without having to commit ourselves to saying that what, if anything, we do find to be distinctive of physical education will also enable us to justify it; although if it did it would provide us with a very strong kind of justification.

Of course it may not be possible to do this by finding just one common element for it is more likely there will be several. Furthermore, if they are to be conceptually important, these elements must be central, although it may well be the case that some will be more crucial to one aspect of physical education than they will to another.

Now, it is of the first importance that we do look again, for if these common elements or criteria cannot be found, as some have indeed suggested, we

will have to conclude that what comes under the P.E. umbrella is, after all, no more than a loose collection of activities, which can be likened to all those activities that come under the banner of primary education (except that with physical education the more cynical amongst us might suggest the activities being together have little to do with their educational point and a lot to do with historical accident).

We are also, I have suggested, badly in need of a theory of physical education; and it will be necessary at a later stage, when we come to look at how physical education can be justified (see chapter eleven) to consider what kind of theory of physical education can be given that will explain the common but distinctive and unique nature of physical education.

#### (a) The Common Nature of Physical Education

It is interesting that those who have already decided we should actually dispense with the term physical education as a concept, usually admit that the activities have a little in common, even if it is no more than the fact that they all have something to do with the movement of the body! I hope to show that they all have a lot more in common than this and furthermore that it will take up a sufficiently central position to warrant their inclusion into one conceptual group. It is no good if the aspects which they all share have little bearing on the actual nature of any one activity.

First of all let us list all the kinds of activities that are considered to be a part of physical education:

Physical Games (e.g. tennis, netball, cricket, badminton).

Athletics (e.g. hurdling, polevaulting, sprinting).

Outdoor Pursuits (e.g. mountaineering, sailing, orienteering).

Dance (e.g. National, Ballroom, Modern Educational Dance, Classical and Modern Ballet).

Gymnastics.

Swimming and associated water sports.

Trampolining, Diving.

Combat Sports.

Physical Training Activities: Strength and fitness training - including such things as keep-fit, weight and circuit training, aerobics.



Now I would suggest that, with the exception of the last group, these activities can be said to fulfil all of the following criteria:

- (1) They are necessarily performative and not spectator activities;
- (2) They are essentially physical activities, exercise and the intentional movement of the human body are all important (although this is not to say they do not also involve to a lesser extent the use of the intellect and practical reasoning as well).
- (3) All P.E. activities involve the performance of movements which are difficult to execute and require learning and practice as well as natural ability if they are to be mastered.
- (4) Following on from (3) it can be said that they all have standards of excellence built into them. It is in the nature of all P.E. activities that they allow for the realization of physical skill. How skilful any performance is will depend on the extent to which it reaches these standards, and what these are will be dependent on the particular activity in question (for example the criteria by which we judge the value of a game of tennis will be quite different from those used to judge a game of football).

More precisely it can be said that: (a) because they are normative in the way just described one has to reach a certain standard before one can be said to be even engaging in the activity, and that: (b) each activity has the potential of making it possible for participants to reach a certain standard of performance, even to the extent that its value will be universally recognised as a human achievement. In many activities this will be because of what might be described as the demonstration of physical prowess in others as the creation of aesthetic and sometimes artistic excellence.

- (5) The point of all P.E. activities is an intrinsic, non-instrumental one (even if, as we shall see, some can be described in instrumental terms). They are non-productive in that the activities do not result in anything of material value being made, in other words, the movements are

significant in themselves. It is because this criterion is operative that we do not see in the list above, carpentry, the work of the lumberjack, micro-surgery or opera singing. The point of all P.E. activities lies in the actual performance of movement as movement, the character of which will be dependent on the particular activity in question.

- (6) It is because P.E. activities are non-instrumental that the most likely reason why they are engaged in must be because of the intrinsic satisfaction they can give. (They are not, as it is often said, carried out as a means to an end but for their own sake.) The kinds of intrinsic satisfaction open to the participant will lie in the common nature of the activities just outlined. For example:

(i) there is generally the satisfaction from experiencing the interplay of many different powers, for example, fitness, physical strength, skill, imagination creativity, practical judgment and style, and the harmony that comes from the release of these powers working together;

(ii) more specifically there is the satisfaction from learning to move skilfully in the medium of a particular activity, for example the satisfaction that comes from mastering a difficult pattern of movements;

(iii) also quite specifically there is the satisfaction from learning to move aesthetically or by giving a performance which has aesthetic value.

Then incidentally there is also the satisfaction which comes from:

(i) physically recreating,

(ii) appreciating natural beauty and the aesthetic form of physical movements,

(iii) being and feeling fit.

To summarize the above in a sentence, it can be said that P.E. activities are physically performative, having standards of excellence built into them so that it is, (a) necessary through learning and practice to reach a certain standard before one can engage in them at all, (b) open to a performer in any one activity to reach such a high standard the value of his performance would have universal recognition as a human achievement; and where the



point of these activities does not lie in effecting an instrumental end, but largely in the intrinsic satisfaction gained from participating in a physical activity as a physical activity.

However, physical training activities like circuit training, weight training, aerobics, keep-fit, although they fulfil the first four criteria given, they may not always fulfil the last two. Certainly the point of these kinds of physical activities is clearly not a non-instrumental one (although this is not to say they are not often engaged in for purely intrinsic reasons, such as the satisfaction the exercise itself can bring, rather than for the instrumental benefit of becoming, for example, fitter or stronger). Here, I would argue that while these kinds of activities may be conceptually different from P.E. activities they are rightly included within the P.E. programme because they are instrumental in enabling us to engage in P.E. activities. For example, fitness training will help the swimmer, the sprinter and the games player to achieve their different ends. (Fitness or P.T. activities can also be said to be essentially physical ones which have educational value because by promoting fitness and physical strength they can contribute in an indirect way to the development of the person. (see pp.282-283).)

Now I would argue, taking all the criteria that have been given, that what I have said constitutes a very large measure of common ground and which would enable us, if a new activity presented itself as a P.E. candidate, to assess whether or not it could be rightfully included. If, for example, gardening, scrabble or ear-wiggling were put forward we would know it would be right to reject them. (With regard to the last activity, it is interesting that contrary to what has often been said about physical education in the past (7), these activities involve an awful lot more than just having a knack.) As each criterion is to do with the basic nature of each activity it cannot be dismissed as being conceptually unimportant, however, we must also recognise that the criteria put forward do not enable us to know the entire nature of any one activity for this will depend on the specific characteristics of each activity. In other words, we must accept that while there is this common ground, there are many important differences as well. The main one which is usually recognised is between those activities which are largely sporting or athletic activities, where the most important kind of satisfaction can be said to come from learning to move skilfully; and those

activities, like dance, where the chief kind of satisfaction to be gained from engaging in them is aesthetic in character. We can therefore gain a greater understanding of the conceptual nature of physical education by looking: firstly, at the concept of sport and the satisfaction that can be gained from learning to move skilfully. This will provide the subject matter for the rest of this chapter. Secondly, at the concept of the aesthetic and the satisfaction that can be gained from learning to move aesthetically which will provide the subject matter for the following chapter.

### SPORT AND THE VALUE OF PHYSICAL SKILL

#### (b) Sport

Although each sport has its unique character, I hope to show they are similar in certain important ways which can help explain the nature of sport and why we value it.

It is interesting that the many definitions of sport which have been given are often quite contradictory. For example, a fairly typical way of defining sport is one like H. Graves gives in his article, 'A Philosophy of Sport' (8). He starts off by saying that the original meaning of sport could well have come from the medieval word 'se disportare' and he concludes that what is essential to all sporting activities is that they must be undertaken for the sake of recreation as distinct from business. On the other hand, there are those like L. Collins, who, in his article, 'Sport and Physical Recreation' (9), suggests that the prerequisite of all sports is 'the demand for preparation and a degree of commitment on behalf of the participants whose primary aim is to win', and he concludes that sport is often 'the antithesis of recreation and diversion'. He accepts, however, that the same activity may be sport to one and physical recreation to another.

Now these two ways in which sport can be conceived means there is not only a problem of meaning but of their value as well. And the way in which sport is to be characterised is of the utmost importance when we come to look at physical education as physical education, because those who hold that sport is a form of man's play, argue a case for physical education in terms of educating for leisure and those who see it as the serious commitment to winning, argue a case for physical education in terms of the pursuit of excellence and the demonstration of physical prowess. And the view which



wins the day will have a direct bearing on what is taught as physical education and how it is taught and whether it is taught at all. This is because, for example, if we are educating for leisure it might be thought that the level of skill which had to be achieved would be much lower than what is required if we are after the pursuit of physical excellence, and, because, there are many who would say if our values are only recreational ones we should have no place on a compulsory school curriculum. It is therefore now imperative that we examine the nature and meaning of sport to see if this contradiction is real or apparent, for if it can be shown there is, perhaps, confusion rather than contradiction, then clearing this up, should, at a later stage, throw light on the further question of its value and justification when considered as a part of physical education.

First of all let us look at the play view of sport. Here, the emphasis would be placed on the idea of sport as self-contained, non-serious, pursued only for reasons of enjoyment or recreation and where the question of how well one was performing would be unimportant.

Now one of the difficulties in conceiving sport in this way (a view which I held myself at one stage (10)) is that it is difficult to see what sport, like many other intrinsically worthwhile activities\*, particularly when engaged in at a certain level, have in common with the spontaneous play of children.

## ii THE CONCEPT OF PLAY

It is because play is often seen to have educational importance, and yet on the face of it education is a serious business in a way play is not, that philosophers like R. Dearden have considered it worthwhile to give a thorough analysis of the concept as a way of throwing light on this apparent paradox (11).

### (a) R. Dearden's Analysis

In his article 'The Concept of Play', he argues that play is non-serious and self-contained which is engaged in just for the satisfaction involved in it. And he says all play activities are non-serious in that they have no purpose dictated by prudence nor do they fulfil any kind of obligation (12).

\*(for which I shall use the abbreviation iwwa)

Crucial to Dearden's analysis, then, is the emphasis he places on the non-seriousness of play. He recognises however that there are other activities mostly in the arts and sciences, which on the face of it also look non-serious, inasmuch that they too are pursued quite apart from having any obvious applications to the serious business of living, and in that we do not have any obligation to pursue them. However, he says though they often do give satisfaction to those who pursue them, the reason for pursuing them as worthwhile in themselves is rather to seek to establish or to create something of objective value, whether this is some mathematical proof, scientific law or object of aesthetic merit. They are to be assessed not primarily by the satisfactions which they give, but by impersonal criteria of truth and merit (13).

Now, two things concern me here. Firstly, while it is undoubtedly true that iwwa are often assessed by these kinds of criteria, this does not mean that the value these activities have is not assessed by the participant very much in terms of the satisfaction he gets from engaging in them.

Secondly, and more importantly, granted that unlike the spontaneous play of children, adult activities or what is produced by them, are often appraised by evaluative criteria why does this make them serious? If this is the distinguishing mark we would have to allow chess to be considered as serious and other kinds of games which are not nearly so demanding as chess but which could still be assessed by criteria of merit but which in his article Dearden firmly classifies as instances of play. It is not until he specifies that 'there are adult activities worthwhile in themselves which explore aspects of the conception of ourselves and of our situation which provide the background against which our objective evaluation of seriousness are made', that we have the means of distinguishing those intrinsically worthwhile adult activities which constitute play from those which do not. But the problem now is that as this analysis stands very little is left out, for there are many adult activities which could not be described in this way although they are characterised by criteria of excellence and demand persistence and commitment for their participation and seem quite unlike the natural play of children.

It is a problem which is tackled by N. Gayer and M.F. Burnyeat in their article 'Play & Pleasure' (14). They suggest that there is a danger in applying the criterion of intrinsic motivation to both children's play and



activities that adults engage in for their own sake (i.e. because of what is involved in them). They suggest the term should only be applied to adult activities, because what is characteristic of children's play is that while it is motivated by pleasure, it is only pleasure in general; children do not look for specific satisfaction, rather they flit in and out of play, as the mood takes them. In contrast, the adult who is engaged in intrinsically enjoyable activities is not so easily distracted, because for him what is important is not any kind of pleasure but the specific satisfaction that comes from doing one thing rather than another, and which is derived from an appreciation of particular features of the activity in question (15).

Consequently, Gayer & Burnyeat conclude that as iwwa form an important part of adult life, and as adults typically do take most of what they do seriously, it is hard to see how non-seriousness is compatible with the satisfaction they get from these kinds of activities. They suggest that as play is centrally and fundamentally the concern of children, the desire for pleasure, regardless of how it is obtained, is the hallmark of play and not intrinsic motivation (16).

In his reply to Gayer's and Burnyeat's article, Dearden changes his original position. He admits that play is characteristic of children and that 'while adults amuse themselves and enjoy their leisure, play is most evident if at all in their contact with their children' (17). He accepts that adults engaged in leisure activities can be committed to objective standards or values in a way a person who merely plays is not. This means he extends the range of iwwa which cannot be classified as play so that instead of there being very few that are left out, now there are very few that are left in.

The concept of play is therefore firmly pushed back to what children naturally engage in without commitment or seriousness of purpose. Dearden says:

'the modification of otherwise transient moods by wider awareness and longer term considerations is such a feature of adult life that it penetrates even leisure and amusements in a way that makes genuine play marginal or even non-existent amongst adult activities' (18).

It would seem, then, taking Dearden's analysis and Gayer's and Burnyeat's analysis all together that most adult leisure activities, although they are

self-contained and pursued voluntarily, can be discounted as instances of play on two counts:

- (1) The satisfaction which a person gets from engaging in them is not just the result of searching for pleasure in general, but it is gained because of the intrinsic feelings which characterise engagement in the activity.
- (2) They are serious largely because they have standards or criteria of merit written into them and they are taken seriously because those engaged in these activities have to be committed to reaching and fulfilling these standards or criteria.

Now as they stand there are problems with these. With regard to the first criterion, Gayer and Burnyeat consider that play is all about the pursuit of pleasure qua pleasure not intrinsic satisfaction, consequently it is a feature of children's play that they tend to flit from one activity to another in search of whatever they find pleasurable. But while this may be the case, it is not necessarily the case as they wish to suggest, for even very young children can be absorbed in one particular activity, one particular toy. Frequently, the reason for this is that they are attracted to the intrinsic features of that toy or activity, so that the value they attach to them lies in their uniqueness and is irreplaceable - nothing else will do as well. If, for example, a favourite toy is lost or broken, it is of no comfort for the child if it is replaced by a similar, even near identical one. He liked the fact his doll was armless, his truck bright green but faded in parts, his plastic sword sturdy but bent at the end. They become fixated not only with particular toys but games as well; they can repeat them endlessly never apparently tiring of them and always concerned that they are always played in exactly the same way. It would therefore seem extremely arbitrary to say that the satisfaction children gain from play is not just as intrinsic as the satisfaction of those engaged in adult leisure pursuits, for their pleasure is uniquely tied to those features that amuse and fascinate them. (It is not just the experiencing of a particular feeling state which might come, for example from cuddling their teddies or sucking their dummies.)

Then, with regard to the second criterion, I think more needs to be said about the significance of an activity having objective value. For it is surely



the case that many play activities of children also have criteria of merit written into them and demand effort and concentration if they are to be engaged in. Furthermore it is possible to assess whether the game is a good one even if it is as simple as playing tiddleywinks, where 'good' is assessed by the player's skill, and not just by how much fun everyone is having. In other words, one can refer to many activities and games pursued by children for their amusement which nevertheless fulfil the criteria that should discount them as instances of play.

It is because of these kinds of difficulties that I would like to give the following analysis which while based on similar considerations to the ones already given I think it is an improvement because it takes these kinds of difficulties into account.

I wish to argue initially, as Dearden has done, that what marks off the early and natural play of children (which must provide the paradigm case in any analysis) from other intrinsically worthwhile activities is that there is no concern for standards. It may be possible to evaluate the performance of a young child while he is engaged in his own activity, but if one is viewing it as play it would not be appropriate to do so. In play the satisfaction the child gets comes from pleasure, where pleasure is very much the result of idiosyncratic attraction an activity has for him and not because of any kind of achievement or the satisfaction 'from getting it right'. On this understanding of play one cannot play badly.

#### (b) The Distinction between Play and Other Intrinsically Worthwhile Activities

It is interesting that the distinguishing mark between play and other intrinsically worthwhile activities cannot be made in the end by noting whether it is children or adults who pursue them. Adults play children's games and children engage in adult activities. This is no more true than it is in sport. It is not difficult to see when children have stopped merely playing. It is easy for example to see the difference between the child playing in the water and the child swimming breast stroke, the child kicking a ball around and the child playing football. What has to become characteristic of the child's activity is that it is appropriate to assess his performance as an iwwa (although this does not mean he does not have to be doing well at it). In sport particularly in the eastern communist countries, children are trained in techniques of particular sports from the earliest possible age, these

children are not playing. (Indeed one may question whether they are engaged in iwwa either if, that is, they have no choice and only gain satisfaction from gaining the approval of their coach rather than through the activity itself.)

When one hears of two year olds water skiing and thoroughly enjoying it one has to accept that even babies can engage in adult activities. Often adults keen for their children to excel at these activities of which they are devotees, try and teach them as soon as they can hold the ball, wear ice skates, blow on a trumpet, or put on a pair of boxing gloves. They are often disappointed; in the end they may well find themselves saying, 'they don't want to learn, just let them play, they will come round to it soon enough'. Once they do want to learn and learn how to do it properly they have stopped just playing and it becomes appropriate to talk of evaluating their performances. Furthermore, how well they do will have a direct bearing on the satisfaction they get in participating.

One can distinguish, then, between play and iwwa in that while both are pursued for the sake of intrinsic satisfaction, only the latter are characterised by their potential for enabling those who engage in them to show considerable skill, knowledge, physical prowess, intellectual ability, craftsmanship, aesthetic understanding and so on, where the person engaging in it does so. :-

(a) because he is concerned with doing well, coming up to 'the mark', getting it 'right', improving his performance, and (b) where he is motivated by the intrinsic satisfaction he can gain from participating in the activity, where how well he is able to perform has some bearing on the kind of satisfaction gained. This means that, on the whole, knowing whether play is going on is decided negatively, in that there is no concern for standards, where it is inappropriate to assess how well a person is doing, and where his satisfaction has little to do with the quality of his performance. Furthermore, it can be seen that adult activities are designed, or more correctly speaking have evolved, to bring intrinsic satisfaction, so that unlike the natural play of children, where one has to rely on knowing their motives (I would agree with Dearden here contra Gayer and Burnyeat that a child who only has an instrumental reason for what he is doing is not playing), one can say they are non-instrumental by their very natures. It may be that someone plays tennis or backgammon for some extrinsic motive, for example for money or to make friends, but this does not alter the fact that the point of these activities



is an intrinsic one. And as we have seen they are characterised by norms of correctness, standards of excellence, truth criteria and so on. I have also argued that even if a participant is not doing very well he must still be concerned with trying to gain mastery if he is not to be thought to be just 'playing at it'.

On the basis of this analysis I would now like to look at particular examples some of which will illustrate the analysis in a straightforward way and others of which will prove to be more problematic and more interesting. I shall use the word 'skill' at this stage in the broadest sense - it may be allowed to refer to physical, intellectual or artistic skill depending on the kind of skill a particular activity demands.

1. Those activities which require little or no skill to be engaged in. There are certain structured activities and games like snap, snakes and ladders, parlour games, which are engaged in because they are found to be pleasurable, but which are limited in their scope for anything to be achieved which could be considered to have any kind of objective value. It is just inappropriate in many kinds of pursuits which are carried out for pleasure, to be assessed in terms of standards of excellence. One can therefore say unproblematically that those who engage in them at whatever age are just playing.

There are many activities which come into this category, particularly those which require luck rather than judgment, or, where if it is required it is extremely limited in its scope, and it is true to say that adults engage in these just as much as children. Dearden I think is wrong in suggesting otherwise. Adults do play, we have only to think of the value they attach to such things as beetle drives and bingo to illustrate this point (at least when money is not at stake!).

It is possible and perhaps helpful to consider play activities where skill is less important than just the fun of taking part on a continuum. This would start with play activities that require little or no skill and finish with an activity before the level of skill becomes sufficiently great for it to become appropriate to talk in terms of judging the quality of a person's performance rather than his mere enjoyment, in the middle would be activities where it would be possible to assess how well a person was doing but the extent to which this would be done would be extremely limited, or where little value would be attached to doing this.

2. Those activities which require a lot of skill to be engaged in. There are activities like chess, archaeology, diving, carpentry, home computing, juggling, which are characterised like play activities by being non-instrumental, and which can be engaged in for the sake of getting intrinsic satisfaction, but which unlike play activities are characterised by the demand they make on those who are engaged in them to show considerable skill. The nature of this will depend on the activity in question, it may, for example, require physical prowess, craftsmanship, aesthetic understanding, scientific insight, creativity or a phenomenal memory. The person who is engaged in these activities does so because he is concerned with mastering the activity, coming up to the mark, fulfilling the standards the activity demands, not only because this is necessary if he is to engage in it at all, but because of the satisfaction he gets from both his own achievement and in his objective appreciation of those intrinsic features that are either being displayed in the activity (for example a first class game of cricket) or being created by means of the activity (for example making an elegant pot). Again, one can say categorically that these are not play activities and those engaged in them are not playing. Furthermore, as I argued earlier, these activities are not only available to adults, instruction of children in these kinds of activities is just as common, especially in educational institutions, particularly where there is the belief that the future success or progress in an activity depends on 'getting them young'.

3. Those activities which allow for the realization of both a minimum and maximum amount of skill. Now this category is pertinent when considering the two conceptions of sport considered earlier, one which viewed sport as fun, amusement, recreation, the other which viewed sport as the serious commitment to the pursuit of physical excellence; and I hope to show at this stage why both views are, after all, compatible and can be applied equally well, at least to a great many sports.

First of all, it needs to be emphasised that with regard to those iwwa that are rule-governed (like sport) that even those which can be engaged in simply as play or for amusement are still characterised by normative standards and, because of this, to be able to ascertain whether they are being engaged in, it is not enough to know that the participants are playing according to the rules, we also need to be able to show that certain objectives, namely those the rules are designed to bring about, are being achieved. If, for



example, we saw two persons keeping to the rules of tennis but neither of them ever hit the ball (or very rarely) we could not justify the claim that they were playing tennis. The most we might be able to say would be that the players were trying to engage in the activity of a game of tennis. But until they started to achieve certain objectives like striking the ball, getting the ball over the net, returning the ball etc. that are characteristic of tennis, they could not be said to be playing the game. In other words there are certain standards to be reached however minimal (and the same principle could be applied to other rule-governed iwwa, certainly to all sporting activities) before one can be said to be engaging in the activity.

Now, there are many activities (and not only sporting ones) characterised by normative standards and at a certain point by criteria of excellence which nonetheless it is possible to engage in with the minimum amount of learning, where the participant is not necessarily doing very well at it and more importantly, is not concerned about how well he is doing, whose main motivation is just the fun he can have from playing, but where in the same activity the potential exists for the participant to display an enormous amount of skill and to get the same kind of intrinsic satisfaction described under the last heading, which comes from playing well, seeing the activity at its best and trying to improve one's performance.

In other words, there are some activities where, while a certain standard always has to be reached before one can say the activities are going on, nevertheless, the skill threshold is sufficiently low at the beginning for persons to engage in them without too much natural ability, persistence or hard practice. It may not necessarily be the case that the intrinsic value of the activity itself does not matter to him, but knowing that he will never be any good at it, he prefers to watch it played or being done at its best by others and to play or to engage in it himself for mere amusement or recreation. Examples of these could be table tennis, badminton, embroidery, photography, certain card games.

These people, then, are playing in an activity where other participants, because they are concerned with improving their performance, fulfilling criteria of excellence to realize the activity at its best, are not. But it is not possible to play at all intrinsically worthwhile activities, there are some which because of their natures, unless one continues to be concerned about

reaching certain standards by fulfilling very difficult objectives one cannot be said to be engaging in the activity at all. This is true for example of figure skating, bridge, archaeology, computing, synchronised swimming (although one may of course be engaged in the activity of trying to master them). And it can be argued that where adults or, for that matter, children do engage in certain iwwa (and this is true of sporting activities) but only in order to 'play', who, after having reached a standard that enables them to participate in the activity, are not concerned with improving their performance or realizing the activity at its best, then they have missed a lot of the point of the activity (see pp278-80 for further discussion on this).

4. Those activities which are recognised or are often put under the description of children's play but which nonetheless have the potential for realizing a great deal of skill. On the face of it the existence of this category may appear to suggest the analysis given so far is wrong, for it might be said that there are many activities which are not natural or spontaneous, but are structured, defined by tight rules and more importantly are difficult to master without a great deal of practice or skill, but which nevertheless, when we watch children engage in them we would judge them to be playing because it is something that only children, and not adults, do. Examples of these kinds of activities would be hopscotch, skipping, playing marbles, and hoop bowling. Imagine that the children engaged in them are very concerned (as they often are) with doing as well as possible and that their satisfaction comes from their increased mastery. Now on the analysis given, these activities would not count as play yet this is how they are usually regarded by the casual observer.

In reply to this, I would argue that what is happening in these activities is, in actual fact, no different from what is happening when children are engaged in what are recognised to be adult activities. The fact that skipping has the status of play and not the status of an adult activity is neither here nor there. Imagine that diving is not the sport we recognise it as today but is only engaged in by children when they have nothing better to do. If, by natural ability, continual practice, learning from each other what they were doing took on the character of a highly skilful activity, where the children's satisfaction came from making this activity possible, improving their performance, then the children are not playing, whatever we might think. There are no doubt many adult sports which



started off as the unorganised activities of children with time on their hands. Again with these kinds of examples, one can see that the same activity may be play to one child and an intrinsically worthwhile activity to another.

(c) Non-Seriousness

It will be noticed that although the analysis of play which has been given is very much a development of what Dearden has already said, no use has been made of the notion of non-seriousness and yet, for Dearden, it is this criterion which he considers to be crucial in the demarcation of play. For example he says, 'we have to look at play against a background of adult social life which is made up of activities evaluated as serious in that they are engaged in for some further purpose, the omission of which would constitute neglect' (19). He goes on to argue that the person who plays does not regard his activity as being serious in this objective evaluative sense. If it is a child who is playing this may not be the case, but this does not matter, for it is the adult's evaluation that counts, and on the basis of this, he teaches the child when he is playing and when he is not. It is not until the child has some understanding of what constitutes the serious business of the adult world that he can fully grasp the concept of what he can remember doing naturally from his earliest days.

Now, Dearden uses this criterion of non-seriousness to make the distinction between play and non-play as others have used it to distinguish between physical recreation and serious sport. But I would wish to suggest that adult leisure activities are usually non-serious and this is because, as with children's play, nothing depends on engaging in them as it does on earning a living, paying one's debts, fulfilling moral obligations, so this criterion cannot be as vital as Dearden and many others have often thought. So why, it might be asked, is this notion so often brought forward in an analysis of play? I think one of the reasons for this is that 'serious' is given the same meaning as 'important' and clearly adult leisure activities are valued as important in a way children's play is not (although it is often considered instrumentally important, if it can be shown to fulfil valuable biological or social functions). But the meaning of the two concepts is quite different, although their meanings are related. This is not, however, again as is often thought, because what we consider important to us we also consider to be of the utmost seriousness. A man's hobby may be important to him and intrinsically so (in other words it is not just of value in some

psychological sense because it provides him with a means of relaxation). Furthermore, while he is engaging in it he may take it very seriously indeed. But because it does not come under the day's agenda of serious business he can therefore enjoy it without anxiety because nothing of any greater importance depends on it. Indeed it is possible for a person to evaluate all aspects of his life in terms of their importance without having to think of any of them as serious, because nothing of further importance depends on them or they are never threatened and therefore never cause him any anxiety. For most of us, however, this is most unlikely; a lot of what we do, particularly the decisions we make are serious because they affect so many other important areas of our lives. We just cannot afford, for example, to neglect our work because what is important to us, namely our livelihood, is dependent upon it. We therefore have to see it as a serious matter if we are to see it any way at all. But in these kinds of instances, when we talk about what we take seriously, we are not (as we are when, for example, we talk about how a person might pursue a hobby) describing an attitude but an objective evaluation. But of course this is also true of what we consider to be important to us. So we need to know what makes the difference between the two kinds of assessment.

Now, I would suggest that when we ask for an objective evaluation with regard to the seriousness of a situation or action as opposed to its importance we are talking about the implications it has for what is important to us and how great those implications are. If we ask, for example, how serious an illness is we want to know the effect it will have on the person's health and ultimately his life, or if we are concerned about a crack in the wall of our house we realize its seriousness only if we find it threatens the foundations and therefore the house itself. Although what is serious is clearly important it is only instrumentally important, dependent for its importance on what is important to us in its own right, for example, our health and our homes.

To say, then, that something is non-serious is not to say it is unimportant but it may be to say anything very positive, it may just mean the question of seriousness does not arise and this I think is the case with adult leisure activities. It is misleading to say they are non-serious for this, as I have argued, does not mean they are unimportant, neither does it refer to some inherent quality, certainly it is no reason to discredit them or to consider them as less important than what we do evaluate as a serious matter,



particularly when what is serious is only instrumentally important in securing what is of ultimate importance to us. It is because, for example, that we value sport intrinsically that if our right to engage in it became threatened, then fighting to maintain or secure that right would become a serious matter.

I would conclude that to describe play as non-serious is to say nothing of importance depends upon it, which taken as a conceptual statement says nothing very much and certainly does not help us to distinguish between play and intrinsically worthwhile adult activities, and taken as an empirical statement is obviously false. While adult leisure activities, like children's play, have much in common in that they are self-contained, non-instrumental and pursued voluntarily, the essential difference is not a question of their seriousness, but that, unlike play, they are intrinsically important, characterised as they are by normative criteria in a way that play is not.

### iii SPORT

I have tried to show that to talk of adult leisure activities as play does not do justice to what many of them involve. Being normative, they demand, unlike children's play, standards to be reached, techniques to be mastered, a body of knowledge to be understood. Now, if all we wanted to do was to play, either as amusement or recreation, we may as well choose those activities that are not too difficult, which give immediate pleasure without too much hard work and practice. If, however, we are after the intrinsic kind of satisfaction gained from an understanding and mastery of the 'art' of an activity that we appreciate for its own sake, then this means we have to do more than play to find this kind of fulfilment.

If we now turn to sport, it must be said that it is possible to view some sporting activities as play and recreation on the one hand and as intrinsically worthwhile activities where there is a concern for standards, on the other. Sport, then, can, up to a point accommodate the two views outlined earlier. This is because in some sports one only has to reach a fairly low standard just to be able to take part which one can then play for pleasure, without wishing to improve or try to realize a better game because one values the quality of the game itself. One can be quite content to play badly, indeed, as one is only playing the question of how well one is playing does not arise.

However, as I argued earlier, the character of sports is such that a certain level of expertise has to be achieved before one can be said to be engaging in them at all. And it is also true that all sports have the potential for those engaging in them to learn how to move more and more skilfully. Furthermore, this is what one would expect those who valued them intrinsically to want to do. This is because, as I hope to show below, the point of these activities for the participants (even though some choose to ignore it), lies in the satisfaction that can be gained from moving skilfully. Consequently, the more skilful one becomes, the greater should be the satisfaction gained from participating.

The reason why the point of these activities can be said to lie in the satisfaction to be gained from moving skilfully is because of the underlying nature of these activities, which can be characterised independently of a player's motives at any particular time. And what I wish to suggest is that sporting activities exist in the way that they do in order to bring about the realization of physical skill because it is valued as an end in itself.

Compare for example pole vaulting to the building of a wall. Both activities can be described in instrumental terms. There are distinctive ends: in pole vaulting to have cleared the bar raised at a particular height, in the bricklaying to have built the wall; and in both cases there are the means used for achieving these ends. The difference between the two is not that in the bricklaying the activity achieves an end, for which the bricklaying is simply the means, but rather that the end is valued as an end. If this stopped being the case, if people started building walls where no one wanted them but simply because of the value attached to bricklaying itself, then it would, I suggest, have taken on the character of a sport. One can see in many kinds of sporting activities, that in some time in the past, the same kinds of movements were carried out for the sake of bringing about an end because the end itself was valued - consider javelin throwing, fencing and archery. Now the distinction, for example, between fencing as a sport and fencing as a duel, is not only that one can be described in instrumental terms and the other cannot, but rather only in the one that is not a sport is the end valued as an end. But the point of sporting activities lies in a different place altogether. Although sporting activities can be described in instrumental terms and an end can often be specified, for example, clearing the box, scoring a goal, hitting the target, the end is



merely contrived and exists only for the sake of bringing about the means; for it is the means which are valued in their own right, because it is they which demand and make possible the exercise of physical skill. It is interesting that in the case of the duel, say as it was fought in Italy in the sixteenth century, while the main intention was an instrumental one, not any way of killing the enemy would do, it had, therefore, even at this stage, something of the character of a sport.

The view, then, that I wish to defend is that 'sport' can be said to refer to those activities which can be described in instrumental terms (and in some cases assessed by them) but which are instrumentally contrived to bring about an artificial end, because the bringing about of the end demands physical skill which is valued for its own sake and which at its best is recognised as a human achievement. The point of the activity therefore to the performer lies in the intrinsic satisfaction from learning to move more and more skilfully.

#### (a) Physical Skill

It can be seen that this analysis relies heavily on the notion of physical skill which now therefore needs to be examined in some detail. First of all it must be said that not everything which can be described as skill in sport will be physical skill. For example, there will be the ability to make good tactical judgments and D. Carr has already done a lot of work in showing that P.E. activities involve practical reasoning (20). (See also pp.285-296 for a discussion of Carr's account.)

However my argument is that if we are talking about sport, then by definition physical skill must be predominant. If, for example, intellectual skill became more important then we are talking about something other than just a sporting activity. Now the coach may in a game be said, up to a point, to be taking part in the activity by telling the players what to do from the side-line (providing that is they took some notice of what he was saying!) but it would be absurd to say he was therefore playing the game and this is true even if his instruction, based on his ability for practical reasoning, enables his team to win. It is not difficult to envisage a game where as far as movement was concerned all that was required was the pushing of buttons which results in actions carried out by mechanical players. However skilfully one played this kind of game, it would not involve physical skill and consequently would not constitute sport, but an

intellectual activity (providing of course there was a sufficient degree of intellectual complexity about the game). Indeed one could still be said to be playing even if one instructed someone else which buttons to press.

The same kind of point can be made with regard to the aesthetic in sport, for while many sporting activities are defined by aesthetic criteria they are not predominant, and that is why they are regarded as sporting activities and not aesthetic or artistic ones. Occasionally you get an equal demand for physical and aesthetic skill, this I think is the case with some forms of ice skating, then of course they can be described either way, but the whole question of the aesthetic in sport can be left for the moment as it is dealt with in the next chapter.

The assessment of physical skill can refer to a specific action, the arm action of the crawl, the handstand in gymnastics, the drop volley in tennis; a player's individual performance, a team's performance of a particular move or of a whole activity. When we say someone is moving skilfully we are evaluating his performance positively. We are saying he is doing well, and the basis on which we will make this judgment will depend on the criteria of excellence operative in the particular sporting activity in question. What counts as a skilful performance in one activity will be quite different from what counts as a skilful performance in another. However, as in all instances of sport we are, by definition, talking predominantly about physical skill, it will be true to say that what is being assessed must be how well a physical task is being carried out as a physical task. It therefore only starts to become appropriate to describe a person as being physically skilful if he is consistently successful in bringing about those physical objectives demanded by a particular sport.

It might be objected that defining physical skill so loosely fails to take into account that very often an athlete or games player is successful in carrying out a physical task but only because he is very strong or has staying power. However, I would argue that these considerations come into a completely different category from the word skill, for they are put forward as factors which explain why he is successful. Indeed, we would put forward a whole range of reasons, for example his mobility, coordination and quick reflex action. Now all of these are measurable but we do not measure skill we assess it, for as Ryle tells us 'skill is not an act it is a disposition'.(21)



Of course this is not to deny that the word 'skill' is often used as if it was a causal factor which explained a person's achievement, but it has to be recognised that if it is used in such a way that it is put on a par with other physical factors like stamina, flexibility or fitness then it has an entirely different meaning. Usually what is being referred to is a recognised pattern of movements which is commonly found to be successful in a particular sport, in certain situations. In other words, it is given the same meaning as 'technique', or more precisely good technique, where 'good' means 'known to be successful'.

However, technical ability is not just decided by whether the person is in fact successful, it is possible to say a person has a good technique even though on occasion he fails to achieve a particular objective (for example putting the ball into the basket) conversely we may judge a person to have a poor technique although he is successful. Now the reason why we are able to make these judgments is because it has been found over a period of time, through trial and error and more recently through our technological knowledge and our knowledge of physiology, that certain ways of performing are more effective than others (and where this is important, more efficient) in carrying out the task (e.g. swimming through water as quickly as possible, jumping the greatest possible distance, abseiling down a rock, or hang gliding). We then come to recognise these patterns or sequences of movement even when, on a particular occasion it so happens that they are not successful, perhaps because the opposition is better, the performer is tired or just plain unlucky. It is therefore possible to assess if a person is technically good at an activity simply by observing the technique used and without even knowing if on a particular occasion it achieved the desired end.

We can see now that it is because it can be shown that certain techniques enable a person to achieve physical objectives that the word technique is often replaced by the word 'skill'. But it should be remembered that strictly speaking the technique is not a skill, rather if it is done well and it is effective then it shows skill.

It would be apposite here to draw on the distinction that Von Wright makes in his book 'The Varieties of Goodness' (22). He distinguishes between logical or achievement tests and causal or symptomatic tests. Only the former are decisive in assessing a person's ability at a particular activity and this

is because it is logically related to it. Examples of showing oneself to be successful on this kind of test would be winning a football match, beating the world land speed racing record, coming first after sprinting a hundred metres, climbing to the top of the mountain or throwing the furthest distance in a discus throwing competition. A causal or symptomatic test on the other hand is not ultimately decisive rather it is indicative of ability because it can be shown there is a causal connection between doing well at it and being successful at the logical test. In other words, on the basis of a causal test one can say there is evidence to suggest that a person may have abilities in a particular activity, for example, doing well at tests which measure muscular strength would indicate an ability for weightlifting.

The evaluation of technique as the accurate execution of a predetermined set of movements can be an achievement test. This is true for example in gymnastics and ice skating, but in most sports the assessment of technique on the basis of how it looks, will, like most assessments of strength and stamina be a symptomatic test, on the basis of which we can do no more than point out potential ability or predict how a person might do in an actual performance. With regard to the former, it is interesting to note that however good we think a technique looks we must recognise it to be inferior to another kind, if that technique proves to be more effective in the test that ultimately matters - achieving the physical objectives, logically defined by the game. We must accept for example that the straddle, however well it is performed technically, is inferior as a technique to the fosbury flop because the latter gets better results in the achievement test. If, as is sometimes argued, the best team did not win - team X showed great skill throughout but failed to score any goals and team Y was of a fairly average ability but managed to score a goal largely through luck at the last minute, then it is necessary to remember that, while of course this often does happen, it could not happen all the time. If a team keeps on winning then it must be more skilful than the other teams, if this is because of the techniques they are using, even though they may be different or even at variance to what has been recognised in the past as 'good' technique, these must now have proven worth over the techniques used by the other teams.

The decisiveness of an achievement test in assessing skill is, however, subject to certain considerations regarding the nature of the activity itself. We would not consider, for example, that there was much justification for talking about players showing physical skill in an activity where it is



possible to secure its physical objectives without too much difficulty, either because the technique required could be mastered quickly and executed easily, or because the activity could be carried out by only using movements we do naturally anyway, like walking at a moderate pace. So we need now to look at the importance of assessing the degree of difficulty to our understanding of physical skill.

(b) Assessing the Degree of Difficulty

In order to assess physical skill we need to know not only that a person is consistently successful in achieving a physical objective but how difficult the task is to achieve. We would not begin to assess a person as physically skilful even though he was consistently successful, if the movements he performed were extremely easy, like walking to the bus stop or bending down and picking up an object. The grounds on which we decide the degree of difficulty will be dependent on several factors, specifically, most of these will be understood by having detailed knowledge of each sport, what it takes to master it and the standards operating at the time. But more generally it will depend on knowing that we have certain physiological and anatomical limitations that make the execution of certain physical tasks hard for us. Given our physiological constitution it is not difficult for most of us to jump 20 cm. into the air, but it shows a lot of skill to reach 1.5 m. and of course we would not be really so impressed by man's high jumping achievements if he lived on the moon.

In describing a person as skilful, then we need to know not only how well a person consistently performs a physical task but how difficult that task is and I would suggest this can be judged in relation to three different factors;

- (1) the standard of the opposition
- (2) the physical technique demanded by the sport
- (3) our physical constitutional make-up.

1. The standard of the opposition. In a game to be able to assess the skill of a person's or team's performance we need to know not only who won but how difficult it was for them to win, beating a team in the fourth division is not nearly so difficult as beating a team in the first division. In judging the standard of the opposition it is not enough to know the score, or even

to have followed the game closely throughout, unless one has the means of assessing the game against a great deal of background knowledge.

It is because games like football and golf are based on a 'league' or 'handicap' system that we are able to assess the level of a team's skill by taking into account its position within the system as well as whether they win any particular game. One can also judge it technically as we shall see below, and this, as far as the basic value of sport goes, (which I have argued lies in the realization of physical skill for its own sake) may ultimately be the overriding consideration.

In athletic events we need to know the age of the participants, whether they are men or women, the standards which are operating at the time at a local, national and international level. Our judgment will always be a relative one as records keep being broken we will change our conception of what constitutes a difficult objective. To give a well worn example, we considered thirty years ago the four minute mile to be difficult to achieve in a way we would not consider it to be difficult today, at least not for top athletes.

2. Difficult physical technique. In some sporting activities like gymnastics and trampolining we need to know not only that each task or predetermined sequence of movement is accurately executed but how difficult the task was to accomplish. If we were assessing the quality of movement of a functional object like the cutting action of a blade in a piece of machinery we would not have the problem of assessing the skill of the blade but simply its technical goodness where this relates to the end it serves. But in a sport where we are concerned to assess a performer's skill we have to look not just to the end achieved (where this can refer to the whole sequence of predetermined movement) but what it takes to achieve this end. For example it involves knowing the amount of practice required, how much natural ability is needed and how exceptional or rare a person's technical ability might be. It is for these reasons that we cannot just rely on knowing the result of an achievement test in deciding whether a person is skilful or not, for we also need to know, at least in some sports, how technically difficult it is for a performer to be successful.

Now I believe this to be true of games. Although it is possible for a person to find an extremely effective way of doing something that may ultimately



enable him or his team to win, this does not necessarily mean his movements can be described as skilful, for the way he has found may be technically very easy. But the point is, that this could not be the case for very long, because the nature of games as sporting activities is such that they exist to make it necessary for the players to perform movements that do demonstrate skill. Now, in some sports, and I believe this includes games (as well as ones that can be non-competitive, like ski jumping) this is ensured by making it necessary for players to perform movements that are technically very difficult before they can achieve the objective or objectives logically defined by the activity, which are in a sense artificial and contrived for this purpose. In the case of games the objective is to win according to the rules. Although the game (unlike say trampolining) is not actually defined by technically difficult movements, it is because of the nature of the rules, that certain difficult techniques come to characterise the game; and it is the fact that they are competitive that high standards of play are established, because in striving to win better ways of securing specific objectives (for example, passing the ball) will be found. For, even if to begin with these might be technically quite easy, providing they are effective this will then make it more difficult for the opposition, who, in their turn, will have to find better ways of playing. As the opposition gets better so it becomes harder to win and the standards of technical play (as well as, of course, tactical play) necessarily go up. If this did not occur, if, for example, the technical skill of a game deteriorated because it became too easy to win then we would change the rules in order to make it more difficult. To describe games in the way B. Suits has done in his article 'What is a Game?', we would put more unnecessary obstacles in the way of the players (23); or we would make the game fairer by making it obligatory to play within a class of players similar in relevant respects; and of course, this happens already, we distinguish according to age, sex, weight and standard of play.

Whether we are talking about games where there is the overall objective of winning and difficult techniques have developed over a period of time to secure this objective as winning becomes more difficult, or something like gymnastics or diving which involve the mastery and execution from the outset of pre-prescribed movements that are already in themselves technically difficult, we value what it takes to be successful - the realization of physical skill. It is not therefore like the value we attach to functional objects, where, providing the end we want is brought about, it would not matter when a new functional object was involved if it was technically less

interesting or difficult (although the latter at least is perhaps unlikely). In purely functional terms the object would be a better one than the one it replaced if the end it achieved fulfilled our purposes better. We therefore value electric or diesel trains over steam trains, electric lamps over oil lamps. The way we value sport is more like the way those who still value steam engines as steam engines do so because what they involve technically they find intrinsically interesting and because of what they demonstrate in terms of human ingenuity.

3. The limitations of our constitutional make-up. Sometimes we assess physical skill where the prime consideration is not technical difficulty but the extent to which our physical limitations as human beings (and more specifically as male and female human beings) are overcome.

In athletics, for example, in all events beating one's own record and for top athletes beating world records, is extremely important. On the whole the technique which is used is subservient to this end. It does not matter, for example in long jump, if an athlete uses a technique easier to execute than the one used by the other athletes if he jumps further. The main consideration is whether an athlete's technique enables him to be successful, where success is measured by the achievements of ends that are difficult for us to reach because of our physical limitations. In this context we often talk about physical prowess and it can be found not only in athletics but in such activities as swimming, mountaineering and water sports as well, not to mention the remarkable physical feats undertaken by those trying to get into the Guinness Book of Records, like the person who tight-rope walked along a cable car wire several miles up a mountain.

Sometimes in a particular athletic activity the means are written into the end. In other words the activity logically demands a particular method of movement, for example, jumping as far as possible but only while doing the action of the triple jump. Now here it does look as if the technique as a demonstration of physical skill is important in its own right. (Consider for example the technical difficulty in mastering the dolphin stroke or hurdling.) But even though technique clearly is important and logically determined by the activity, it is still the case that it is subservient to achieving a further end which can be measured. Ultimately we assess its value only in relation to how well it brings about this end of the activity which is measurable in terms of how long, how fast or how high.



It is perhaps the recognition of this kind of physical prowess which is admired most universally and at its best takes on a moral dimension. It is because we have a close awareness of our own physical limitations including our own finiteness that we marvel at those who push themselves physically to the limit, like the marathon winner; defy gravity as the ski jumper seems to do so proficiently; undertake amazing feats of strength and endurance which must be the experience of most mountaineers and weight lifters; for most of us can only dream of flying through the air, running endlessly without getting out of breath. In reality we find we are slow and awkward in our movements; although easy access to motor transport and labour saving machines means for much of the time we can forget about it, usually however, we are still able to respond with admiration when others try and succeed to conquer their physical limitations which we all experience as human beings.

### (c) The Point of Sporting Activities

I have argued that sporting activities are those which can be described in instrumental terms but where the end is artificial and exists only because reaching it requires means that demand physical skill from the participant. But while it is appropriate to describe sporting activities in instrumental terms at the same time it is also true to say that sporting activities are engaged in for non-instrumental reasons - because of the intrinsic satisfaction obtained from engaging in them. Now this may at first appear to be contradictory but actually the contradiction is merely apparent, for my argument is that sporting activities are contrived as instrumental ones and therefore exist not for the sake of bringing about an instrumental end, but because what is needed to bring about this end is intrinsically valued, namely the means characterised by the employment of skilful movement by the participant. While in some activities it is possible to specify one instrumental end - getting to the top of the mountain, hitting the bullseye, clearing the bar, in many sporting activities one can only see the end as a series of instrumental tasks: keeping the ball in one's possession, passing the ball to another player while avoiding the opposition, getting the ball into the net and so on. In each situation that arises in the game or activity one has to be able to use the most effective means of securing the specific objective, which are instrumental in achieving the final objective which can often be described in terms of winning.

1. Best on 'purposive and non-purposive sports. There are some sports, however, like trampolining and diving where it is appropriate and indeed logically necessary to describe them not only in instrumental terms but aesthetic ones as well. There is a distinction which D. Best has referred to as the distinction between purposive and non-purposive or aesthetic sports (24). He argues that it is a mistaken assumption to think that the point of an activity must somehow always be identifiable as an end or purpose distinct from the activity, and that while in purposive sports the purpose can be specified independently of the manner of achieving it, as long as it conforms to the limits set by the rules or norms, in aesthetic sports this is not the case, for here their purpose cannot be considered apart from the manner of achieving it. (25).

But, while Best acknowledges that in aesthetic sports their point and value lie within the activity itself, he does not seem to acknowledge that in what he calls 'purposive sports' this is equally true. For while an end often can indeed be specified independently of the means of achieving it, their point and value do not lie in achieving this end as an end. It is because, I would argue, that their point is to be found in what is necessary to secure this end (which is merely a contrived one), namely skilful movement, that the difference between 'purposive' and 'aesthetic' sports is not as great as Best would like to suppose.

All sports (including aesthetic ones) involve the carrying out of difficult physical tasks which demand a great deal of skill, the nature of which will depend on the activity in question. If this was not the case, if, for example, aesthetic presentation became more important than the display of physical skill (as indeed it does in dance) then we would not be talking about sport at all. The fact that some can be described completely in instrumental or 'purposive' terms and some cannot, is neither here nor there; the value of all sports, by definition must be predominantly about the realization of physical skill. In some sports this will be achieved by aiming within the rules for certain independently specifiable objectives and, in others, by performing pre-prescribed movements that for different reasons are difficult to perform which also have to fulfil aesthetic criteria.

Best comes nearest to recognising this when he talks about 'closing the gap'. He says that even in the case of the aesthetic sports there is still



to a very limited extent an externally identifiable aim: for example the requirements set by each particular movement in gymnastics and that it is also possible to consider purposive sports from the aesthetic point of view; and he argues: 'these considerations help reduce the gap between means and end, which is not fundamental and cuts across any kind of aesthetic character a particular sport may or may not have' (26).

But these observations, while not incorrect, still fail to show an appreciation of the underlying nature of sport, whether defined by aesthetic criteria or not. For example Best says 'from a purely purposive point of view any way of winning (within the rules) will do' (27). This makes it look as if the end is valued as an end, and providing it is achieved it does not matter what means are used. But of course it does matter how. If it turns out the end can be achieved very easily then the end is changed or different means of achieving the end are invented to make it more difficult to do so. Even though Best acknowledges that while in purposive sports the end (which can be specified independently of the manner of achieving it) can only be achieved by conforming to the limits set by the rules or norms, he fails to point out the importance of these rules in determining the whole character of the sport. For, I would argue, the rules are there solely in order to bring about certain means of achieving the end, namely means that will demonstrate skill and it is within these means that the value and point of the activity lie. As B. Suits argues, in the article already referred to, 'if we were playing a game in order to achieve an instrumental end, how absurd the activity would then become. If all I wanted to do, for example, was to put a ball into a small hole, why should I make the task so difficult for myself by putting unnecessary obstacles in the way' (28). We accept the rules that make the obstacles obligatory, Suits argues, because it makes the activity possible; and I would argue further that we accept the rules because of the intrinsic value we attach to the physical skill required in trying to overcome such limitations.

It is of the utmost importance that while we can, as Best has done, talk of some sports in 'purposive' terms one has to always qualify this by saying 'according to the rules'. It is the rules which define the game and only exist to bring about what comes to characterise the activity. For example, its technical and tactical features. If it could be found, therefore, that changing the rules would increase the standard of the game, for example, by making the end or ends more difficult to achieve, we would not hesitate to do it.

In relation to aesthetic sports, Best supports his argument that how one performs certain movements is not incidental but central to these sports by citing the fact that how one performs a particular movement is actually written into the name we give to the movement itself. But this argument is just as relevant in 'purposive sports'. Once certain ways of securing the end are mastered they are also given technical names, for example, 'dribbling', 'hurdling', 'cradling', (not any way of a player getting the ball up the field would count as 'dribbling' just as not any way of dropping into the water would count as a dive). Unlike a dive or a vault these do not imply aesthetic norms but they certainly imply technical ones. It is because certain techniques such as the above characterise a particular sport we have good reason, if they are found to be missing, to say that the sport in question is not going on, even though the rules are being adhered to and the participants are trying to secure an independently specifiable end. This often seems to be justified when novices are trying to play, for example, a game of hockey or tennis.

2. C. Bailey on games and winning. A similar lack of insight can, I think, be found in what C. Bailey has to say on the nature of games in Physical Education, (29) for he too fails to consider that what can be demonstrated to be the logical point of games and competitive activities may not be the same as the point of these activities in the more fundamental sense of why they exist at all.

His main concern is a very real one - namely that because games are essentially competitive they may be inappropriate as a compulsory part of general education. In particular he considers that it certainly means that there are strong arguments for saying that games cannot help, as has been commonly thought, in a child's moral education. (See chapter eleven pp.301-315 for a discussion on how physical education might contribute to a child's moral education.)

His main argument is that the notion of winning lies logically and conceptually at the heart of that family of concepts constituting the idea of competitive games and is not, therefore, 'so easily dispensed with or diminished in importance as might be imagined' (30). He says to try to pretend that winning is an unavoidable consideration is to deny the logic of games for not only is the notion of winning unavoidable but it is crucial to the point of the



enterprise. On this basis he concludes that 'we are in games talking about activities where basically what is celebrated is the desire for individuals and groups to demonstrate their superiority over other individuals or groups' (31).

Now, as others like K. Thompson (32) and S.J. Parry (33) have argued, Bailey's account of games rests entirely on the notion of 'the point of the activity' S.J. Parry, for example, says that of course it is logically true that in order to play one has to try to win, but this does not mean that you have to have winning as your reason for playing. Parry gives Thompson's example of the businessman who whilst he plays must necessarily play to win, but where his reason for playing is relaxation and to keep fit (34). This is, however, an unfortunate example because it means Parry's criticism is not as effective as it might have been, for there is a stronger meaning of the point of an activity, which does not refer to a person's individual motive at any particular time. Bailey could therefore well retort to Parry's criticism that he would not deny that participants in a game could have many different motives, but that these are a contingent matter whereas the desire to win is a motive a person must necessarily have if he is going to engage in the activity.

If we think Bailey is wrong, what we have to try to show is that what he puts forward as a motive does not have to be described as a motive at all, in other words we have to show, as Parry does indeed attempt to do, that Bailey is wrong in describing the fact one necessarily has to try to win if one is to play as a necessary desire to win, and I would suggest the best way of doing this would be to look more closely into the notion of winning.

3. Winning. To say one is playing to win does not in itself explain a person's motive for playing, rather as Parry argues (35) it simply points to a necessary truth about engaging in competitive games. When someone says, 'I only play to win', we have to probe further, we have to find out what for that person the winning is a means to. As winning is a purely formal notion it cannot be the winning itself which he values but it could either be, (1) what it gives him - money, fame, someone's hand in marriage, or, (2) what it demonstrates - his superiority over the other side. If winning is said to be all important then it is only because of those values already attached to the winning. We only value winning because of what is won or because what that winning demonstrates, namely our superiority, gives us personal satisfaction.

Now where the desire to win is a result of valuing what there is to be won, this, as a motive, cannot be described as anything but a contingent one. For while it is indeed possible to win prizes, money and fame from playing and there are plenty of people for whom playing games is a profession, nevertheless, in these cases what is won is extrinsic to the activity itself qua competitive game - it is not the necessary result of playing as, for example, during the course of a game of basketball gaining possession of the ball must be.

In other kinds of competition which fit into the kind of analysis that, for example, R. Dearden gives, where A and B are in competition for X and where A gaining X must exclude B from gaining it, (36) there is a *prima facie* justification for saying that they are trying to win because they value what there is to be won, because this is the reason for there being the competition in the first place. If they could gain X without having to compete there would be no reason for the competition.

But in sport we value the competitive activity itself. The point of the activity lies not in what there is to be won but what has to be done in order to win. Imagine in a situation where tribal groups are fighting over limited food supplies, a particular group goes to a place where they believe food to be found but in the custody of another tribe. When they get there they find the food has been left unguarded and delighted and relieved they take the food home. Compare that event to where the group, who, on finding the food readily available are disappointed and who instead of taking it home, hang around hoping the other tribe will turn up so they can fight for it first; or consider that they do meet some opposition but that it is very weak so they have no difficulty in overcoming it. Now imagine that after showing their overwhelming superiority instead of taking the food and going home they decide that as the standard of fighting had not been up to much they would like to engage the enemy again. Perhaps they invite the other tribe (at least those who are left of them) to go back and get some better fighters, and after this both sides get together to devise certain rules to put up certain obstacles in order to make it more difficult to fight so that more skill is called for. If all this was to happen the ensuing battle would have taken on something of the character of a game, for in a game opposing teams have to cooperate. They have to voluntarily get together and agree to be bound by the rules if there is to be a competition at all and they do it not because



they value something extrinsic to the activity for which the competition is only the means of getting it, (this is often the case for those firms trying to win export orders) but because they value the competitive activity itself.

There is a difference in games between where the desire to win refers to what is contingently attached to winning and where it refers to what is necessarily attached to it. It is a difference, the importance of which Parry does not consider sufficiently and it is because of this difference that Bailey's argument is stronger than Parry's allows for. For while playing for money like playing to feel relaxed and get fit are only based on personal considerations and are only contingently connected to winning, where one plays in order to win because by winning one can show oneself to be superior, there is a logical connection. For while it is not a logical consequence of playing a game that one feels relaxed and fitter or wins a prize of some kind, it is a logical consequence that one knows which individual team or player is better.

We need then to look again at the distinction between personal motives (which could be quite idiosyncratic) and the point of the game which lies in the nature of the activity rather than in the participants' reason for playing at any particular time. I would argue that while there is indeed, by definition, a competitive point to the activity, this is dependent on there being a more fundamental one which explains why the activity exists at all, and in the way that it does. Although a game must necessarily show one performer to be superior to another, if this is valued and can therefore be seen to serve as a motive, it is only because what a performer can show he is superior at is valued in the first place. The value of winning does not lie beyond the game (as it does in other kinds of competition), rather it is to be found by what happened within the game. We have to know why we value the game intrinsically first, before we can know why we value being superior at it. I have already argued that we value those games which can be described as sport because they make possible the realization of physical skill, which is valued as an end in itself and because of the satisfaction the performer gets from learning to move skilfully.

Now, Bailey makes it sound as if the development of physical skill could only be valued as a means to winning, but this is to misconceive the nature of sport altogether, for as I have argued what counts as winning is

contrived, it is based on an artificial set up to make the activity possible and enable what is intrinsically valued - namely physical skill to be realized and assessed. I have also argued that it is because of the competitive nature of some sports that standards are likely to go up, because as the opposition improves so it becomes harder to win and so greater skill is called for, and this, I suggest, is the true point of the games being competitive - it means standards of play (whether understood in technical or tactical terms) are likely to go on getting better. It is also possible for the reasons given earlier to be able to recognise quality of play in a game, independently of knowing the score, so we can acknowledge the brilliance of a performer's physical skill even though he loses. And a person can see the point of playing even if he knows beforehand that he is unlikely to win.

Of course there will always be those who do not actually value intrinsically the physical skilful nature of a sporting activity, but who will play to win in that narrow sense where they simply want the psychological satisfaction of winning and where the activity is seen simply as a means to that end. They may not even like playing but they just happen to be good at it. But this could be true in all activities and not just competitive ones, providing the craft, hobby, intellectual pursuit, creative activity, performative art or whatever is universally valued to a high degree. If a person is good and if there is the opportunity for comparisons to be made, he can use this to show himself to be superior to others and to get satisfaction from so doing. In these cases there is again no reason why he necessarily values what he is good at in any intrinsic sense.

4. Educational implications. Bailey is concerned that because games are competitive by nature that we are therefore 'essentially, centrally, teaching pupils to win' (37) 'and that this goes against a certain view of education, namely, that education is to do with the development of fundamental knowledge and understanding and has nothing at all to do with helping people to demonstrate their superiority over others' (38). He argues on the lines that Dearden has also argued (39), that a person can gain knowledge and understanding without loss to anybody else, but this apparently is not the case in competitive games. 'Here we have the difficulty of harnessing any genuine educational purposes to those specifically competitive activities and secondly there is the difficulty therefore of justifying competitive games in an educational context' (40).



But these are problems only if one thinks that winning to the exclusion of others winning is the fundamental point of playing games. But as I have argued, unlike other kinds of competition where the reason they take place is dependent on something of value standing independently of the competitive activity which all competing parties want but only one can have to the exclusion of everyone else, in sport what is valued lies within the game itself. The opposition far from preventing one from getting what one wants, enables one to get it - namely a contest of physical skill. There is absolutely no reason why any player or team of players should prevent any other player from becoming as skilful as the activity and the person's ability allow. In fact as I have shown the opposite is more likely to be the case.

Just because in a particular game one side loses and therefore fails to show its superiority does not mean it cannot show itself to be extremely good. And conversely, why even though a team by winning shows itself to be superior, its performance cannot be assessed as being extremely poor. It is in the nature of sporting activities that they offer the opportunity for us to learn to move more and more skilfully and to get satisfaction from so doing. It is because of this that most players who win a game but without having to show the level of skill they are capable of are disappointed and get less satisfaction from playing than those who know they played as skilfully as they could although in the end they lost the game.

#### FOOTNOTES

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- 30 Ibid., p.25.
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- 33 S.J. Parry, 'The Concept of Excellence in Sport', N.A.F.H.E. P.E. Section (1977).
- 34 Ibid., p.7.
- 35 Ibid., pp.6-9.
- 36 See R.F. Dearden, Problems in Primary Education, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976) p.114.
- 37 C. Bailey, op. cit., p.26.
- 38 C. Bailey, op. cit., p.29.

- 39 R.F. Dearden, Problems in Primary Education, op. cit., pp.117-119.
- 40 C. Bailey, op. cit. p.30.



**CHAPTER TEN: DEFINING THE SUBJECT MATTER (2):**  
**PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND AESTHETIC VALUES**

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## CHAPTER TEN: DEFINING THE SUBJECT MATTER(2) PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND AESTHETIC VALUES

### A. AESTHETIC VALUES AND VALUES IN ART

Having in the previous chapter looked at those specific values to be found in sport because of the satisfaction to be gained from learning to move skilfully, I now wish to turn to the other main kind of satisfaction that can be gained from participating in P.E. activities and that is satisfaction of an aesthetic kind.

#### i AESTHETIC VALUES

If the concept of the aesthetic could be explained simply in terms of making a purely sensual response, then it would be difficult to see the need for education in enabling a child to have aesthetic experiences. But given that the subjects' response is logically inseparable from the object and can only be identified by reference to the nature of that object (1), and given what might be involved in understanding and the making of it both requiring initiation, then it is possible to argue a case for aesthetic education.

It is because the aesthetic experience or response is logically tied to the object and demands judgment, where the reasons given for one's aesthetic satisfaction (or otherwise) lie in the nature of the object (2), that it is possible to talk of aesthetic satisfaction being non-detachable (3) and aesthetic appreciation being normative. As Kant said, 'the judgment of taste requires the agreement of everyone, and he who describes anything as beautiful claims that everyone ought to give his approval to the object in question and also describe it as beautiful' (4); and similarly, R. Scruton, echoing Kant, has written:

'a normative attitude seeks to found agreement in reason and not in some chance convergence of opinion.. A man with a normative attitude to X feels that others should recognise the qualities that he likes or admires in X and on this basis come to like X for themselves'.(5)

The normative nature of aesthetics is only too evident when one looks at all the different aesthetic activities which have evolved over a period of time



where there are definitive rules and procedures for how they are to be conducted and for judging what counts as aesthetic quality. This is not only true in the arts (which, in fact, it may be least true of complicated as they are with other values to do with uniqueness and life meanings) but in simpler aesthetic activities as well, like landscape gardening, fashion design, gymnastics, aeronautic displays, home decorating and hairdressing.

These kinds of activities are highly normative and because of the agreement that has been sought after and found in the past, aesthetic appreciation and aesthetic creativity are invariably only possible after initiation into the rules and principles that have actually come to govern these activities. Of course it has to be acknowledged that rules are continually changing, so that, for example, the dress which is prized as 'sheer elegance' one year is described as 'old fashioned' 'out of date' the next. But this does not alter the need to understand the rules operating at the time, the ones that have gone but from which new ones have emerged and the ones that are more everlasting.

Although a lot of aesthetic understanding of this kind is just picked up generally by living in society, the school can still have a role to play in initiating children into different aesthetic values and activities. Even with something as simple as appreciating a rose it may be necessary to point out to a small child that its beauty lies in its fragrance and simplicity as well as its colour and texture and its power to inspire poets. Examples of material objects like perambulators and lampshades could also be given; for the child can be made aware that aesthetic features are not only a part of the natural but also of the man-made world.

It is interesting that those who argue for the need to understand the aesthetic in terms of taking up a special attitude, often argue that this is necessary because of the tendency we have, at least for most of the time, to view the world purely instrumentally, for example, that we see objects simply as signs and as the means to fulfil our purposes(6). Yet it seems to me that this overstates the case, for while it may be true that our perception of the world is largely instrumental this does not prevent it from being aesthetic as well. Most man-made products, I would suggest, are viewed aesthetically as well as functionally by both maker and consumer. There are few people who buy a motor car who are only interested in its mechanical efficiency. Even our cutlery we can find aesthetically pleasing, distasteful or just plain.

In any case it is insufficient to define the aesthetic in terms of taking up a special attitude (7) although this has often been done in the literature written on aesthetic values in Physical Education and Sport (8) (this has been variously expressed in terms of: attending to the object disinterestedly quite apart from any instrumental use (9); perceiving in a contemplative way (10), seeing and appreciating the object for its own sake (11)) for these do not specify, except perhaps negatively, the kind of judgment on which the aesthetic experience is based. And there are many things which, for example, are viewed disinterestedly and for their own sake, which we would not wish to describe as aesthetic (like an intrinsic interest someone might have in the working mechanism of clocks). In order that we can understand the content of our aesthetic experiences we have to refer to the value necessarily attached to the sensible qualities in the aesthetic object - to the way the object looks, the way it sounds, tastes or feels.

It is because aesthetic considerations enter into a great deal of what we see, hear, feel, etc., that Duchamp's submission of a urinal as a work of art is thought by some to be plausible. Indeed the success of a lot of so called minimal art is due to the fact that we take a lot of what we perceive aesthetically for granted. Minimal art reminds us of these values by abstracting objects from the everyday world and placing them under the aesthetic spot light.

Education also has a part to play, not only in making children aware of those aesthetic considerations operating in their everyday world, but in getting them to actually participate in the making of aesthetic objects. This aspect of a child's aesthetic education is often undermined and classified as recreation rather than education. However, I would suggest that when this happens it is largely because the distinction has not been made sufficiently clear between aesthetic values on the one hand and those to do with art on the other. Aesthetic education has all too often been equated with art education, where the main focus must be on getting children to understand and appreciate works of art. When practical activities like painting and craft work are also referred to as 'art education' this term is thought to be something of a misnomer because, clearly, apart from the very rare exceptions most children's work does not aspire to the condition of art. As a consequence these practical activities then become educationally discredited.



But if the distinction between the two concepts 'aesthetic' and 'art' is accepted then we can justify these activities on quite different grounds from our appreciation of works of art; that is, we can justify them because of their aesthetic value, where aesthetic enjoyment can come from doing, making and creating and not simply contemplating, but where we are not trying to pretend that children are actually producing works of art, G. Dickie's classificatory definition of art being apposite here(12). For Dickie defines art in a descriptive and non-evaluative sense as: (1) an artefact, (2) a set of aspects which has had conferred upon it the status of candidate for appreciation, by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain institution - the art world. It is an advance on many other definitions of art, because, although it does not enable us to determine the grounds on which a work of art is evaluated as a work of art and therefore provides no insight into the nature of art (and it has been criticised for this (13)), it does do justice to art as an open concept and the idea of art as a creative on-going enterprise, where what counts as art is open to change and criticism. And although as a definition it is non-stipulative and value free, nevertheless, as a formula it does preserve the need for what is put forward as art to be subjected to evaluative tests by those who are socially recognised as experts.

Now, there are many activities which are rightly described as aesthetic ones (even if they are instrumental ones as well) which do not involve making works of art but where being able to appreciate and participate in them involves learning and initiation. Furthermore, these activities will vary in the degree to which they demand creative and original work from the participant. Some, like vaulting and ski jumping, will depend only on learning and carrying out aesthetic rules agreed upon and already laid down. Others, like educational gymnastics, will necessitate, if they are to be engaged in at all, originality from the performer.

Looking at education as I have done, as learning which promotes the development of the person qua person, then it can be said that as aesthetic experience and understanding can help in the development of the person as both an agent and as a centre of experience (14), then, on this account, aesthetic activities can be legitimately regarded as being of educational value. (See chapter eleven.)

However, this is not to say that art may not be of greater educational value, because it is not only concerned with aesthetic values, but social values as

well and the value we attach to experiencing human emotions, and it may therefore have more significance for us in our development as persons.

## ii VALUES IN ART

Beardsmore in an interesting article, 'Two Trends in Contemporary Aesthetics' (15), suggests that the most obvious way in which the appreciation of a novel differs from that of a sunset is that it makes sense to talk of learning from a novel in a way that it makes no sense to talk of learning from a sunset.

Beardsmore says the man who sees a sunset may wonder at what he sees, at the kaleidoscope of colours, the lines and shapes but he will never have to wonder what to make of it (16). But in art we do just this - we look for meaning and significance, because art demands from us much more than the ability to perceive and enjoy aesthetic features. Indeed, it is because of the 'human' dimension in art that it is possible to find works of art worthwhile without finding them enjoyable, perhaps because they are too disturbing or depressing in their message. Part of the reason why we value works of art, then, is not because of any kind of aesthetic satisfaction but because of what we can learn from them. Although this is not to deny the importance of valuing the work of art as a work of art on its own terms and as an end in itself: if a work of art cannot be reduced to aesthetic values this is not to say it can be reduced to human or social ones either. A point that perhaps needs to be borne in mind when reading Beardsmore's article.

In the same article, Beardsmore describes Orwell's example of the experience of a journalist who on seeing a dead German soldier has the meaning of war finally brought home to him. Beardsmore argues that what he has learnt is not a piece of information - that men die in wars, but what war is like. It is this kind of learning - insight into human experience that can be gained from art. Often this experience can only be understood in terms of human emotion and it is presumably for this reason that art is often described as being expressive of emotion where this includes all the arts - music, dance and drama as well as the narrative. While as an account of art it has largely been discredited, it is still true to say that it is because of the strong connection between art and human emotion which may be a necessary rather



than just a contingent one, that art often demands a different kind of response from us than an object that only has formal aesthetic appeal (although I am not denying that obviously many works of art come under only this latter description). This means where someone correctly appraises a work of art but has no emotional response to it, we would question whether he had adequately experienced it as a work of art.

The need for an emotional response where we commit and identify ourselves with the work of art is well argued for by R. Elliott in his article, 'Aesthetic Theory and the Experience of Art', where he talks of experiencing the work from within for which no exquisiteness of taste can compensate' (17). And he also argues that if a work of art is not experienced at an emotional level it is possible that the perceptual features, for example of a painting, will not all emerge. He describes 'Roualt's flight into Egypt' and says:

'It would be quite insignificant if it did not have the power suddenly to make it seem that we are actually there, in an unbounded landscape, with the sky extending over us in a chill dawn ..... If we value a work because it offers us such an experience we may be inclined, for want of a better word, to call it "vivid" or "realistic" but the relevant aesthetic properly cannot be adequately described except by reference to the shift in the subject's point of view' (18).

There are, then, dimensions of art education which are missing in other aesthetic activities. Clearly, to appreciate and to respond appropriately to a particular work of art it is necessary to acquire the relevant knowledge and understanding. Nevertheless, in the end, as with simpler aesthetic activities, it is the first hand experience which counts. The value of art is caught as well as taught, the subjective response being all important. For example, as Reid argues, knowledge about music is necessary for musical understanding but knowing about music, if that means knowledge which is centrally focussed in statements, is never equivalent to knowing music (19). It is, however, questionable whether Reid is right to talk of aesthetic experience as knowledge, however, I would maintain that it is still of educational value even if Reid is wrong on this because, as I argued previously, the development of the person depends on what he comes to value where this is not only the result of what he comes to know.

Furthermore, the fact that as persons we come to hold aesthetic and artistic values, not just because of what we are taught but in the final analysis

only because of how we are able to respond, whether to the natural or man-made world around us, does not mean that these values are not of legitimate concern for educators, or that we have to accept that there are limitations on how far education can contribute to a child's aesthetic development. For I would argue aesthetic education is not only about teaching aesthetic principles apparent in a particular activity or giving those criteria relevant to judging an aesthetic object or work of art. It should also be about putting children in the way of experiences of giving them the right opportunities so they can 'respond', 'catch', 'delight in' - aesthetic objects, activities and works of art. And with particular reference to art, I would say the importance of its appreciation in education is not, simply to be found in the 'act of' contemplation and that it is possible to get children to understand and experience works of art by taking a much more active role. In many art forms there is the opportunity for appreciation to come by the children actually performing, however badly, rather than from being mere spectators. To teach children to recite poetry, act parts in a play, perform dances, to sing and play musical works can help children to respond to and to appreciate art from the inside, as well as giving children, at the same time, the chance to exercise their own creative and imaginative powers, through both interpretation and in producing their own original work.

Finally, it should be said that the distinction between art and aesthetic activities is rarely as clear cut as I have suggested. Aesthetic aspects are important in our appreciation of art and aesthetic activities are not always just concerned with formal qualities. Dance, painting, music, creative writing, for example, can be taught to children so that they can try themselves to find and convey to others through an artistic medium what Martha Graham once referred to as the great matters of the heart.

## B. PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND AESTHETIC VALUES

In recent years a considerable amount of literature has been written on physical education and the aesthetic. Mostly, philosophers who have considered the connection between the two, while being critical of Carlisle's account, (which has already been referred to in the previous chapter, see pp.190-193) have agreed that aesthetic values are to be found in P.E. activities, either from the point of view of the spectator, or the participant, or both, sometimes



contingently, at other times because, like dance, they actually define the activities. On this basis it has been concluded by some that physical education could have a part to play in a child's aesthetic education. The degree to which this is argued for varies depending on the position a philosopher has taken.

Carlisle, for one, would clearly see aesthetic education as the main role of physical education because he argues that the aesthetic provides a unifying concept of physical education and that, not only dance, but all P.E. activities performed at their best constitute art. Then there are those like D.C. Meakin, D. Aspin and L.A. Reid who would not go so far as Carlisle, but nevertheless would argue the contribution P.E. might make to a child's aesthetic education could be considerable, because in some P.E. activities the aesthetic is necessarily characteristic of them and because it can be experienced in all of them, if only incidentally. And then finally, there are those like Best who emphasise that, with the exception of dance, P.E. activities are not artistic ones that in most of them the aesthetic element is incidental, but who, nonetheless, would not deny that aesthetic satisfaction can be gained by both participating and spectating, but who do not attempt to use this connection as a way of justifying physical education.

Unfortunately, where the aesthetic has been looked at in relation to physical education (and this has often been in connection with its justification) there have been some serious weaknesses, the main ones, I would suggest, being as follows:

(a) It is often assumed that to show an activity has aesthetic value is sufficient to show it also has educational value, but clearly whether aesthetic values can also be considered to be educational ones is a prior question which has to be answered first, and this can only be done on the basis of the meaning of education one is defending. Very often this question remains unanswered because no definition of education is put forward and defended in the first place.

(b) Because the aesthetic has been defined in terms of attitude or disinterested mode of perception, this has necessarily meant that all P.E. activities (and not only dance), are potentially of aesthetic value, providing the correct attitude is taken up. Certainly philosophers, like Reid, do



make a distinction between an object which has negative and an object which has positive value for the perceiver, so that while in one sense anything whatever can be held as an aesthetic object, only sometimes is the object aesthetic, in the sense of having positive aesthetic value for the perceiver. However, as it is also argued that P.E. activities tend to have this positive aesthetic value wherever they come up to a particular standard and the performers exhibit a certain level of skill, this tends to make it impossible for P.E. activities (and this includes all sporting activities) not to have at least potential aesthetic value.

(c) The distinction between art and the aesthetic is not always made, with the consequence it is often argued that because sport can be shown to be of aesthetic value and because sporting activities are intentionally carried out by an agent, then sporting activities are forms of art. Sometimes the line taken is slightly less strong, although equally indefensible, that it is only in those activities where the performers' intentions are actually aesthetic ones is it right to call them forms of art and to refer to the performers as artists.

(d) The assumption is usually made that even if sporting activities do not come up to the mark, at least dance is an art form and can be justified as a part of art education. It is usually acknowledged that there are different forms of dance, which are not all defined by artistic criteria, but that at least modern educational dance is an art form. But even this may be to claim too much, it is certainly a creative and aesthetic activity but it is questionable to say the least whether it can be classified as art.

(e) There is insufficient attention paid to the importance of whether the aesthetic value to be found in physical education is from the point of view of the spectator or the participant. Very often, for example, it is thought to be enough that aesthetic value can be found, particularly in sport, by watching it, but this does not establish that there is aesthetic value in it for those who are participating as performers and this must matter when one is considering a justification for physical education, because the term we are interested in refers to active participation in physical activities.

In the account I shall give below of how the aesthetic and artistic values characterise P.E. activities I hope to try and avoid these kinds of weaknesses.



Firstly, I have already established that aesthetic values can be also seen as educational ones and I have done this on the basis of the meaning of education I have put forward and defended as: learning which promotes the development of the person qua person. However, I shall leave the question of how this helps in the justification of physical education until the next chapter.

Secondly, at the beginning of this section I have also spent time defining terms, and at least I cannot be accused of conflating the aesthetic with art and I shall continue to keep the two quite separate. Furthermore, in defining the aesthetic very specifically in terms of the non-detachable satisfaction gained which can only be explained in terms of the perceptual qualities of an 'object', I have given definite criteria which can be applied to P.E. activities. At this stage it remains an open question as to whether they can fulfil these criteria or not.

Thirdly, I shall not, when considering dance and the aesthetic assume that modern educational dance is an art form, but shall consider its actual nature as it is taught under the name of physical education and in the light of what has been said earlier in this chapter on the concept of art.

And lastly, as my interest with justifying physical education is in those physical activities which are participant ones, I shall concentrate throughout on the positive aesthetic value that dance or sport might have for the performer rather than the spectator. I shall try and avoid the mistake of assuming that because it can be shown that sport or dance gives aesthetic satisfaction to the one it therefore follows it gives aesthetic satisfaction to the other.

I shall now consider the aesthetic in physical education under the following headings:

#### i Sport and The Aesthetic

- (a) where aesthetic criteria define at least in part the nature of sporting activities.
- (b) where aesthetic values are found incidentally in sport.
  - 1. the kinaesthetic sense.
  - 2. the enjoyment of natural beauty.

#### ii Dance and The Aesthetic

## i SPORT AND THE AESTHETIC

### (a) Where Aesthetic Criteria Define At Least In Part The Nature of P.E. Activities

The strongest case for trying to show that physical education activities have aesthetic value is usually made by reference to those activities where aesthetic criteria actually define their nature and how they are to be judged. D.C. Meakin, for example, in his article 'Aesthetic Appraisal and Human Movement' (20) argues that unlike other P.E. activities where the aesthetic is purely incidental, so they can be learnt and engaged in without any appreciation of their aesthetic value, in those activities which are defined by aesthetic criteria (for example diving, trampolining and ice skating) it is logically impossible to learn to engage in them without gaining aesthetic understanding at the same time. This is because in all these activities the intrinsic aim is to execute a set of movements in a manner which satisfies aesthetic standards. It is therefore imperative for the performer to know what these standards are and to be able to appraise his own performance according to these standards. It is then largely from this basis (i.e. that participating in physical education necessarily involves the aesthetic) that he concludes, 'it would seem that physical education has a significant part to play in aesthetic education' (21).

But there are problems with Meakin's account, this is partly because he rests a great deal on the performer's ability to appraise his performance during its course. This, according to Meakin, is necessary if the performer is to fulfil his intrinsic aim - performing according to aesthetic standards. But I would wish to argue that as the criteria are visual ones and as he cannot see his own performance, at least while he is performing, he must be dependent on a coach and/or a video tape machine to be able to do it, this means, normally and at least while he is learning, any appraisal the performer makes must be done retrospectively. The only possible way that he might be able to appraise his performance while it is taking place would be, if through a lot of training and experience, he has already achieved success and has come to know kinaesthetically, that is through the sensations of his own movements, how well he has performed these movements, according to the aesthetic criteria operative in that activity. But what has to be accepted here is that it would be quite possible for someone else who has not learnt how to do this, still to have



gained knowledge of the aesthetic principles that govern the activity he is trying to engage in. It may be, for example, that he is still at the stage where, although he knows the movement he is supposed to be doing, he does not know if he has got it right or not and he does not know what it would feel like to get it right (for example, the thief vault in gymnastics) and therefore he is unable to appraise his performance while he is moving.

In any case, I cannot see why it is important to Meakin's account whether or not a performer is able to appraise his performance during its course. For, it is not, as I have just acknowledged, that it is impossible for the performer to do this, but rather I can see no logical necessity why he has to do this simply because he is engaging in activities defined by aesthetic criteria and which are necessarily aesthetic in character. There is no reason why he cannot engage in these activities but leave the appraisal, while he is actually moving to others, especially when in the end it is the observer's appraisal that counts. As Best has argued, that it feels right is no guarantee that it is right(22)'. While kinaesthetic feelings enable us to know through experience and constant correction what we are doing and how well we are doing it, it never acts as a criterion of aesthetic quality. (See below.)

Meakin could quite easily have made his point that a person necessarily gains knowledge of aesthetic principles by engaging in certain sporting activities without having to make this rest on the performer's ability to appraise his performance during its course. The only reason why drawing attention to this ability might be important would be if one wanted to argue that sporting activities could provide the opportunity, not only for gaining knowledge of the aesthetic principles that govern them, but also for some kind of kinaesthetic satisfaction which might, as certainly the name suggests, be an aesthetic experience in its own right. We shall return to considering the validity of this kind of claim later in the chapter.

Other philosophers attempting to justify physical education, like Carlisle, have gone even further and suggested that as certain P.E. activities are defined by aesthetic criteria they can be described as forms of art. As we saw earlier, this kind of extreme position is just one of the consequences of conflating the meaning of the aesthetic with that of art. Because the word 'aesthetic' is applied both outside art and specifically to art it



becomes as easy step to start describing anything that can be classified as an aesthetic activity as an artistic one as well.

The relationship between the aesthetic and art, and whether either or both are to be found in P.E. activities has long been of interest to L.A. Reid. In his article, 'Aesthetic and Education' (23), he acknowledges that while it would be wrong to classify sport as art simply because it can be incidentally of aesthetic value, there may be a case for saying an element of art can be found in sport and that the performer may be something of an artist, but only in those activities where aesthetic criteria are intrinsic to them and where the intention of the performer is, partly at least, aesthetic if he is going to engage in the activity at all.

'The gymnast or ice skater may be like a working artist inasmuch as the aim which controls his whole practical enterprise is an aesthetically contemplative one, he is out to produce forms which when perceived contemplatively in a certain way are aesthetically meaningful' (24).

However, even in these activities, Reid says, we must be careful not to assume without examination that the qualities of which a judge has to take account are 'artistic' qualities. 'Could it be?' he asks, 'that the concern of the judges for smoothness, rhythm, grace, etc., is a concern for strictly speaking functional perfections and not for genuine artistic qualities' (25). He goes on to suggest that the performer may simply learn prescribed movements with great functional skill (presumably in a way that would not be very different from the swimmer learning to put a stroke together to make his swimming as effective as possible) and he argues that it is only if the performer starts to make his own expressive creation that it would be right to describe him as an artist.

Now while I would not wish to disagree with Reid that just because a performer is technically excellent and his performance is defined and judged by aesthetic criteria this does not make him into an artist or his performance into a work of art, I think it is worth emphasising that he is still engaged in an aesthetic activity. Just because the aesthetic rules are clear cut and the proper way of judging aesthetic merit, in say, something like gymnastics, commands considerable, if not unanimous agreement, and just because the performer can learn to carry out his movements that come up to agreed aesthetic standards without having to be creative or original, does not make his performance any less aesthetic or reduce it to achieving only functional perfection.



What I am trying to argue for here is a middle area where an activity can be aesthetic without being artistic but where even if it is only aesthetic in nature, the performer cannot just be concerned with functional perfection. This is because 'functional perfection' suggests that the criteria which will be used for assessment will be to do with the efficiency and skill shown in the movements that are used and not by criteria determining whether the movements are pleasing to look at. Aesthetic activities are, at least in part, and the part that matters, if we are going to call them aesthetic, concerned with how the object looks (and for that matter sounds, tastes or smells) as qualities in their own right, it is these which provide the means by which the performance is assessed.

But this does not necessarily also imply that the performance has to be an original one. In those sporting activities which are also aesthetic ones, the aesthetic criteria that are operating do not necessarily allow for creativity but they are no less aesthetic for that. Even where they do, this is not necessarily taken up by the performer, for he can simply carry out the creative ideas of his coach; just because the performer is unoriginal does not mean that what he is doing is not intentionally aesthetic although it may be one reason for not describing him as an artist.

We can therefore confidently assert that certain P.E. activities are by their nature aesthetic in that they are defined by aesthetic criteria so that those who participate in them can be rightly said to be engaged in aesthetic activities and to have aesthetic intentions, and we can say this without having to worry that their nature depends on fulfilling tightly defined rules already laid down and prescribed by others and which may leave little or no room for imaginative interpretation.

This means that it is possible to argue that those engaging in certain sporting activities (i.e. those defined in part by aesthetic criteria) will necessarily gain aesthetic understanding. For, at the very least, as Meakin recognised, they will have to know which aesthetic criteria are to be fulfilled in learning how to move successfully. However, in making this claim it must be remembered that while it is true that certain sporting activities are defined by aesthetic criteria, these criteria only define a small part of the nature of these activities, the far greater part, as we have seen, being determined by criteria to do with physical skill carried out as an end in



itself (26). It is surely very relevant that while in certain sporting activities aesthetic values play their part, what matters a great deal more is the level of skill reached, where skill refers primarily to the ability to carry out difficult physical tasks, rather than the creation of aesthetic effects. After all a very simple movement idea which is physically very easy to execute may be highly effective aesthetically. Furthermore, the success of an activity, like some forms of modern dance, which are actually defined by aesthetic criteria, depends on seeing the aesthetic effects and not the mechanics which bring them about. But this is not the case in those activities, like diving, where the performance is appraised by technical and not just aesthetic criteria.

It may be in some sporting activities, like figure skating and gymnastics, that we value a performance more highly if it is aesthetically exciting as well as being technically good, but I would argue that if we are still talking about sport the level of physical skill achieved remains the primary consideration. Aesthetic quality must always be of secondary importance, in that however aesthetically pleasing a performance looks it must still be considered poor if the level of skill reached is low. In olympic gymnastics, for example, what is of the first importance in assessing a gymnast's performance is the level of difficulty of the physical tasks undertaken and achieved.

In making this point I would, however, not deny that because aesthetic criteria are written into the nature of the tasks it may often be difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between aesthetic criteria and functional ones. Interestingly, it is often the case that the aesthetic element can make the task more difficult, for example, landing simultaneously on two feet on completing a vault. Moreover, it is often for this reason we value the aesthetic - because the fulfilment of aesthetic criteria means greater skill is called for and not because it results in the movement having aesthetic quality which can be valued intrinsically (this can be well illustrated by the acrobat's performance at the circus which has the effect of making the audience gasp rather than muse, contemplate or be imaginatively inspired) and I would agree with Reid that when physical activities, like ice skating, do have this effect it is extremely debatable whether we are still watching sport. If we start to see and appreciate only the aesthetic quality and not the technique that brings it about we may well be on to something that has a closer affinity with dance.



Secondly, we have to remember that we are concerned with P.E. activities as participant ones. But as the relevant criteria are visual ones this must mean the aesthetic value of the performance is primarily intended for the spectator. Indeed the performer may be seen simply as a means to the end of the activity - the production of an object which has aesthetic value for others, but the performer as an educand must be seen as an end in himself and not simply a means to other people's aesthetic enjoyment.

It has been frequently argued that sporting activities actually defined by aesthetic criteria must provide the best evidence for showing the importance of aesthetic values in physical education because, clearly, it is logically impossible to engage in these activities without gaining an understanding of the aesthetic criteria (the rules and principles which govern the activity) which have to be fulfilled to be successful at them. But what is so often ignored is that while this is true, it is equally true that he could gain this knowledge by theoretical instruction. In short, while certain P.E. activities are designed to bring about aesthetic satisfaction this is primarily intended from the point of view of the audience, and while the participant does gain aesthetic knowledge and learns how to appraise his performance aesthetically this knowledge and ability is no different from that of the initiated spectator.

What is different, however, is the performer's practical ability, his knowing how to execute movements that are aesthetically pleasing to look at. The satisfaction open to the performer is therefore very different from that of the spectator, for the value of what he is trying to do will come, not just from learning how to appraise his performance, but in learning how to get it right, and that means learning how to perform movements that have aesthetic value. This may just be a question of mastering a certain sequence of prescribed movements that fulfil aesthetic criteria laid down by others, but in a few activities, like gymnastics, the value for the performer can also lie in the opportunities he has for creating the aesthetic object himself. But even here, if we are still talking about sport, then, creativity and originality must be directed as much at discovery and learning how to execute difficult movement tasks requiring physical skill, as at the creation of an aesthetic object.



(b) Where Aesthetic Values Are To Be Found Incidentally in Sport

1. The Kinaesthetic Sense. Since the claim was first made by Carlisle that the essential nature of physical education was to be found in the aesthetic, it has, after much debate and controversy, become generally recognised and accepted that in the majority of sporting activities any aesthetic value is largely incidental. However, it is strongly argued that where it is to be found it is not unimportant, being, for example, a positive and not just a negative value. It is therefore rather surprising considering the practical nature of physical education, that while the possibility of gaining aesthetic satisfaction from athletic activities is still admitted, this is invariably seen as a bonus for the spectator, rather than participant.

Perhaps, one of the reasons for this has been due to the way aesthetic has been defined in terms of attitude. This is often understood at least in part by the idea of disinterested contemplation. Clearly this kind of attitude could be more realistically applied to the spectator rather than the participant. One would assume, for example, that the games player would be much too busy trying to score goals and keep up with a changing game to have the time to engage in any kind of aesthetic contemplation. But I would argue, in agreement with W. Charlton, (27) this kind of condition for an aesthetic experience is too restrictive, while it may be a sufficient one it is not a necessary condition, for there are other ways of enjoying an aesthetic object other than contemplating it. For example, I can see no reason why the aesthetic value of a poem could not be enjoyed by reciting it or a play by performing it. Similarly, with regard to the aesthetic potential of sporting activities, I think it can be argued that there is the possibility of the performer as well as the spectator gaining aesthetic satisfaction from them.

One of the main arguments against making such a case would be that if the aesthetic quality in sport is largely visual, then, the spectator must be in a better position if only because he is standing at a distance where he can see the entire sporting scene, and of course, the spectator does not have to concentrate on the mechanics and the current tactical state of the activity in order to watch (although he often does) as the player has to in order to play. But against this it may be possible to argue that the performer can appreciate his own movements aesthetically through different means only open to himself.



D. Best, for example, considers that aesthetic satisfaction can be experienced by the performer and not just the spectator. He describes the batsman's aesthetic experience where he plays a perfectly timed cover drive, as intrinsic to what he is doing, in that 'his experience is logically inseparable' from the stroke he is playing(28). He suggests the experience can occur concurrently with the functional action which the player is carrying out which need not depend on a detached or retrospective contemplation. He concludes that: 'he sees no reason to deny, indeed he sees good reason to insist that one can have what are most appropriately called aesthetic feelings while actually performing the activity' (29). However, he hesitates to describe these as wholly kinaesthetic, he says, 'kinaesthetic' or 'tactile' would not tell the whole story by any means, since producing the same physical movement in a quite different context, for instance, in a laboratory, could not count as producing the same feeling. Best sees the relationship between the feeling and the overall purpose of the movement being particularly important in defining the aesthetic feeling of the performer.

But, while I would not deny the importance of context in explaining the whole nature of the performers' aesthetic experience, nevertheless, I would argue that kinaesthetic satisfaction has to be examined on its own, because, unlike other kinds of satisfaction this sense is peculiar to physical action and activities.

Indeed, in view of this, one might expect that considerable attention would have already been paid to it, at least by philosophers interested in physical education, yet, as P. Arnold has remarked,(30) despite the root meaning being contained within the term, (i.e. kinaesthetic), it is rarely, if ever, discussed in aesthetic literature as a form of perception that can provide aesthetic experience.

It is also interesting that philosophers of physical education like Arnold, Best and Carlisle, while acknowledging that sporting activities can provide the opportunity for aesthetic experience through kinaesthetic sensations have not tried to use this dimension of physical education as a way of justifying it. For clearly, if it was thought, or if it could be shown, that children should gain aesthetic experience through all their senses then it might be thought that physical education would be uniquely placed to enable children to find aesthetic satisfaction through their kinaesthetic sense.



One of the reasons why this kind of specific kinaesthetic justification for physical education is never given is because of the assumption that it is only through sight and hearing that we can have enriching, meaningful and legitimate aesthetic experiences and not through, what are often called, the 'lower' senses, like taste, touch and smell. Pole, for example, writes, 'it is, I think, in accordance with established usage to treat only the two distinct senses, sight and hearing, as definitely aesthetic' (31). And Scruton argues that only the sense of sound and sight can be involved in aesthetic appreciation. He quotes Aquinas, who argues that we cannot speak of beautiful tastes and smells, since the perception of beauty being contemplative is only concerned with the more cognitive senses, namely, sight and hearing, he concludes that when the pleasures of the more cognitive senses approach the purely sensuous level characteristic of taste and smell, we tend to regard them as no longer aesthetic (32).

However, while the opportunity for the expansion of aesthetic experience may be at its greatest through our visual and auditory senses (the fact that works of art are largely concerned only with these senses suggests this is indeed the case) there is no reason why this actually rules out the other senses as possible channels of aesthetic experience. The way to distinguish between the aesthetic and the sensual is to determine whether the satisfaction which is gained is of a detachable or of a non-detachable kind. If the experience is aesthetic its nature cannot be explained by reference to an inner state but only by pointing out and describing the perceptual features of the object of one's satisfaction. Although many of the pleasurable responses which we gain through our senses will be of a sensual and not of an aesthetic nature there is no reason to suppose that these are restricted to the experience we gain from our lower senses or that it is only through the so called higher senses that aesthetic experiences are open to us.

The importance of all the senses to our aesthetic experience is strongly argued for by H. Osborne. He says,

'within the sensory range commonly excluded from aesthetic discussion sensibility can be cultivated and it would make little sense to deny that the sophisticated experience the Chinese connoisseur seeks and obtains from fingering a jade is aesthetic in character' (33).

Now could it also be possible that the highly discriminating awareness the athlete has of the sensations of his own body also provide satisfaction of an aesthetic kind? It is to this kind of justification I now want to turn.



It has been frequently argued in P.E. literature that it is when movements become highly skilled that they take on an aesthetic dimension and that this is true of all P.E. activities and not only of those that are actually defined by aesthetic criteria. This point is usually argued for from the position of the observer, although, as we have seen, there are a few writers, like Best and Arnold, who have argued that aesthetic satisfaction can come from performing skilfully. (Best gives the example of a well-executed drive in tennis, a finely timed stroke in squash.) I think the connection posited here is correct: that very often aesthetic satisfaction becomes possible and increases as the movement becomes more skilful. But it is a further question why this is so. First of all it must be said that the connection is only a contingent one. There is no necessary connection between a skilful performance and the gaining of aesthetic satisfaction for the participant and this is just as true in the performance of those activities actually defined by aesthetic criteria. However, this is not the case with the aesthetic satisfaction the observer can gain from watching activities defined by aesthetic criteria, here there is a necessary connection between the two, and this is because the aesthetic criteria which define them are visual ones (in other words, if he does not appreciate the activity aesthetically he has missed the point of it, or at least, as in the case of aesthetically defined sports, part of it), but it is not the case that what is aesthetically pleasing to look at is necessarily aesthetically pleasing to perform.

It may be, for example, like the person who learns to read braille, the athlete, while having considerable skill in what he is doing gains no aesthetic satisfaction from the activity. Perhaps the movements have become too familiar and automatic for this to happen, or perhaps the opposite is the case: the movements are new and unfamiliar, so the performer is consciously aware of the sensation of his own movement purely as a means of getting the movement right. Sometimes, even for the dancer, the movement may be too uncomfortable or even painful for him to get any kind of aesthetic pleasure, although that same movement may give the spectator a tremendous amount of pleasure. In the case of the games player he may be too anxious to win to gain much aesthetic enjoyment from his movements. Nevertheless, I would argue, the opportunity does exist for the performer to gain aesthetic satisfaction particularly where a high level of skill is reached, although it is not a necessary connection, it often does hold.



However, I would stress here that the central element of this enjoyment must be aesthetic. An athlete or gymnast could be gaining satisfaction just from moving skilfully. It is not the case that any physical activity which is skilfully performed and which gives intrinsic pleasure, necessarily gives us pleasure of an aesthetic kind, to think it does is the mistake Carlisle made, for he assumed that it was enough to show this, to be able to conclude the satisfaction gained was aesthetic. But, we come to value all kinds of things for the sake of the non-detachable satisfaction they can give us but this does not make them aesthetic.

The criterion which refers to the actual content of our satisfaction remains crucial. Now it might be thought that this would refer to the kinaesthetic content, and it might be argued further that as P.E. activities have this content they are uniquely placed to enable the participant to find this kind of aesthetic satisfaction. But this line of argument would be quite mistaken. It would, I suggest, be quite possible for someone to claim that the physical sensations from moving were extremely pleasurable but we would not for that reason alone be able to describe his feelings as aesthetic ones.

This is because, as I have already argued, for an experience to be properly called aesthetic it can only be explained in terms of its object; it was for this reason I said earlier that I thought Scruton was right to talk of the tendency for the aesthetic to become normative, to at least invite the search for inter-subjective agreement, but how can there be agreement on what by their very nature are private states?

If we try to justify the claim that the sensation of moving can bring aesthetic satisfaction to the performer we cannot do this just by pointing to the kinaesthetic experience he has while he is moving. For we would be faced with the same problem that others face when trying to maintain that we can ascribe experiences to others on the basis of the knowledge that we have of our own private mental life. Wittgenstein's analogy of the beetle in the box being just as appropriate to our problem as it is to the underlying metaphysical one, regarding the existence of other persons.

It is because aesthetic satisfaction is of a non-detachable kind it can only be explained in terms of the object that gives us that satisfaction, but it is also true that we can only rightly describe an experience as aesthetic if the



object is of a certain kind, that is if it is given a certain kind of description. It is not the case, as some seem to have thought, that anything can be described as aesthetic because, for example, it is 'contemplated for its own sake' or is 'held still in attention', for as I argued earlier this lets in too much, like the appreciation of a game of bridge or the interest a person might have in the working mechanisms of clocks(34), rather we are concerned with how an aesthetic object looks, feels, sounds or tastes. The reasons we give to explain our aesthetic judgments will therefore always refer to the perceptual qualities of the object(35). But how can we do this with regard to the aesthetic experience of movement? How can we give reasons for saying a movement is aesthetically good that are of a kinaesthetic kind in the way that we could give reasons of an auditory kind when explaining the aesthetic merit of a piece of music?

How could kinaesthetic experiences, in themselves, ever be described as normative? How, for example, could we search for agreement on what we considered to be kinaesthetically good? And, of course, the answer is we cannot do any of these things.

To repeat the problem, it is simply this: the sensation of movement, unlike the sound of music is a private, not a public matter. We all hear the same piece of music, we do not all feel the same movement. And this inevitably means we certainly cannot explain the aesthetic value of movement kinaesthetically. Indeed, we can only do it one way and that, of course, is visually. It is only because the movements are seen that we are provided with public criteria, it is only because of what is visually presented that we can search and (in something like olympic gymnastics) find, agreement.

If someone claimed that a movement was kinaesthetically pleasing to perform but visually it was aesthetically poor, we would not be presented with conflicting evidence on the aesthetic merit of his performance; no, the visual criteria would be sufficient and overriding, we would not even consider the performer's private feelings as relevant in making our judgment.

Are we then to conclude that any kinaesthetic satisfaction is purely sensuous and that while kinaesthetic experiences do bring us pleasure it would not be properly described as aesthetic pleasure? (This could mean the person who jumps off the board can find this as kinaesthetically satisfying as the person who jumps off doing a perfect triple somersault.)



I think this conclusion is too strong, for I think it is possible to argue the case that the performer can gain aesthetic satisfaction through his performance, where the satisfaction is dependent on, and to some extent is derived from, the kinaesthetic experience of moving.

What I wish to suggest is that the performer can also appreciate and enjoy the aesthetic object which is not a mysterious inner state but the movements which everyone (except himself) can fully observe. But the means by which he is able to do this will not be by watching them but by kinaesthetically feeling them. I have already suggested how this can come to be possible, that is, the performer can, through constant practice, instruction and experience of the correct movement, i.e. the movement which is aesthetically successful, (whether intentionally or otherwise) learn the fit between what the movement looks like aesthetically and what the movements feel like to perform. This means when the performer executes aesthetically successful patterns of movement he can know this and through the use of his imagination appreciate them and enjoy them. This is not to say that the performer cannot be mistaken but then so can an uninitiated spectator.

However, as my argument stands this would not make the case that there is a unique kind of aesthetic experience open to the performer, namely a kinaesthetic experience. This is because the appreciation on which the performer's experience is still based is still appreciation of the visual object. It could therefore be said that it is no different in kind from what is gained by watching it, it is just that the performer's appreciation is based on knowledge gained in a different way and where getting aesthetic satisfaction from what he is doing requires the power of his imagination.

Now it might be thought here that what I mean is that there is one aesthetic object but two ways of experiencing it visually and kinaesthetically, but it is not as simple as that and as this stands it would not work. For it could be argued that put this way there are two aesthetic objects not one: the object which is seen and the object which is felt. In a similar way it would be wrong to say that because it is the same apple which is both appreciated for its colour and its taste that there is only one aesthetic object, namely, the apple. For if the apple was aesthetically pleasing to look at but tasted unpleasantly bitter, we would not be presented with conflicting evidence in trying to decide if the apple, as an aesthetic object, was a good one or not.



For clearly just because the apple looks good is no guarantee that it will taste good and vice versa. Rather the apple presents two aesthetic objects, the look of the apple and the taste of the apple.

But in the case of the movement of the athlete or dancer there are not two aesthetic objects but one, namely the movement which is observed. It would be therefore more appropriate to compare the satisfaction which is available to the performer, not with the satisfaction which a person may get from tasting rather than from looking at an apple, but with the satisfaction a person gets from coming to appreciate through touch the visual quality of a vase.

Now, of course, the vase may look smooth but feel rough so he may not be in the best position to appreciate the vase as a visual object. But that does not mean he is in no position at all, and he may be in quite a good position if, as in a similar way that we saw it could be the case with the performer of movement, his appreciation in the first instance is based on actually seeing the aesthetic object and then learning to some extent the fit between how the vase looks and how it feels to the touch. This judgment would, of course, always be limited because he would never through this sense alone be able to know the colouring of the vase, but clearly some degree of appreciation would be possible for him and in general this can be said to be the common experience of blind people.

But there are other difficulties, the texture of the surface may in itself be aesthetically pleasing to him but this should not affect the judgment he makes, for he is appreciating it as a visual object. In other words, touching the vase is therefore not significant in its own right but is simply a means for the person to work out what the object looks like, although this is not to say he will not find the process satisfying.

However, it may be thought that it is difficult to see how someone would enjoy the aesthetic object as such when the whole experience is starting to look like an intellectual exercise. But I would argue it is possible to the extent that he can see and enjoy it in his mind's eye. But this will only be because he has power of imagination and not just because of his detective and interpretative abilities (if this is thought unlikely, consider how at least some of us are able to enjoy a picture or piece of music through recalling it in our imagination).



If we now return to the experience available to the performer of movement, I think the case can be made that while it would be wrong to say that his kinaesthetic experience was in itself aesthetic, this would not mean that we could not correctly say that it is only through the use of his kinaesthetic sense (as well as through the power of his imagination) that he is able to appreciate and enjoy the visual qualities of his movements.

While, then, for both spectator and performer the same aesthetic object is appraised and enjoyed, the process by which the performer is able to do this is entirely different and the importance of this should not be underestimated. For many, it is a process which because it involves the kinaesthetic sense they would rather gain aesthetic enjoyment from performing the movements themselves than from watching the movements of others. (And of course, they may well prefer to perform for other reasons, for example, those to do with the non-detachable satisfaction that can only be gained from moving skilfully.) However, it must always be emphasised that this does not enable us to say that the aesthetic satisfaction he may get is of a kinaesthetic kind.

We have to accept that whatever the word might suggest to the contrary, there is no justification for saying that the sensations we have of the movements of our own bodies are in themselves aesthetic, rather it is because of what they tell us about the visual object that at least there is the possibility that we can make aesthetic appraisals and have aesthetic experiences that can properly be called aesthetic ones.

2. The Enjoyment of Natural Beauty. R.S. Hepburn in his article 'Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty' (36) laments the fact that while in the eighteenth century there was substantial treatment of the beautiful in nature, today writing on aesthetics attends almost exclusively to the arts. He argues that while there are important differences between natural objects and artefacts, 'This should not be seen as entailing the aesthetic unimportance of the former that (on the contrary) several of these differences furnish grounds for distinctive and valuable types of aesthetic experience of nature' (37). He notes, for example, firstly how experiencing the beauty in nature is not simply done from the standpoint of a detached observer, rather we are in nature and a part of it, so that we can be both spectator and actor playing actively with nature.



With regard to education, he argues, that to restrict a person's aesthetic education to the appreciation of the arts would result in him having an inadequate aesthetic understanding for he would either pay little attention to the beauty to be found in nature, or he will look, but look in vain, for what can be found and enjoyed only in art. The distinction between aesthetic enjoyment in the arts and in natural beauty have, he says, to be reckoned with otherwise 'one can neither intelligently pursue nor adequately comprehend experience of natural beauty save only in its most rudimentary forms' (38).

Now clearly the best way of enabling children to appreciate the beauty in nature is to take them into situations where they can experience it first hand. This, however, could be a somewhat artificial exercise, unless the child comes to see himself as a part of this natural world. One way of doing this would be to get him to engage in outdoor sporting pursuits like sailing, rock climbing, surfing, hang-gliding, skiing, where learning to appreciate the beauty of one's natural surroundings can be 'caught'.

It can be said, then, that incidentally there is in fact in many sporting activities the opportunity to enjoy natural beauty. Furthermore, it can be appreciated as part of a total experience, one could, for example, have the satisfaction from moving skilfully through one's natural surroundings and at the same time gain aesthetic enjoyment from those surroundings themselves. The experience may be particularly heightened if one finds the natural world within which one moves awesome or sublime. (39).

## ii DANCE AND THE AESTHETIC

Dance takes many forms and fulfils many different functions. Even if we restrict ourselves to what might be found going on in a school we would still have to acknowledge all of the following: national and folk dancing, historical dancing, classical and modern ballet, ballroom and stage dancing and modern educational dance.

Although all of these are defined and judged at least in part by aesthetic criteria, in the context of justifying physical education most attention has been devoted to modern educational dance. This is because with the exception of classical and modern ballet, which is of less interest because it is usually



carried out only by a small minority of pupils, this kind of dancing is thought to come nearest to our understanding of dance as an art form, for it allows for creativity and is defined solely by artistic/or aesthetic criteria (and not for example by social or religious ones).

However, I would argue there may be a danger in evaluating modern educational dance as an art form and it may be better to describe it as an aesthetic and creative activity. Indeed, if Dickie's definition is taken seriously this will be true of all creative activities carried out in schools. Art education will be largely confined to getting children to appreciate great works of art, although this can include appreciation through performing them. This means, as far as dance is concerned, given the tremendous amount of technical ability required to perform dances recognised as works of art and given the nature of modern educational dance, with its focus on creativity rather than perfecting rigorous technique, it would be easier to understand 'dance' as a part of art education from the point of view of the person watching dances recognised as works of art and not the person who is performing; and, of course, this would not help us to show that the appreciation of art was a part of physical education, because physical education is essentially concerned with participation in physical activities and not in knowing how to appreciate them by just being a spectator.

However, this rather severe line needs to be balanced with the fact that modern educational dance may at its best aspire towards fulfilling the conditions of dance as an art form and can, in any case, even when it falls short of this, help initiate children into artistic values, in a way in which other sporting activities, which may also be legitimately called aesthetic activities, cannot. For example, children can learn, through creating their own dances, how to express not only movement ideas but social values and human emotions as well. There is, as I suggested earlier, an important distinction to be made when we are looking at so called 'creative activities' between those activities which are concerned with artistic values and those that are not.

Olympic gymnastics would be an example of the former and modern educational dance of the latter. Indeed, if taught well there may be more chance that the child comes to appreciate artistic values through his own creativity than if he were a highly trained dancer, but a mere puppet in the hands of a choreographer.



It may be possible then to justify modern educational dance to a limited extent because of the contribution it might make to a child's appreciation of art. However, it is as an aesthetic activity that it can be justified most strongly, although the same argument would still have to apply to modern educational dance as it did to the other physical aesthetic activities, namely, that because we are justifying dance as a participant activity we have to show the knowledge and satisfaction to be gained from participating are in important respects quite different from what might be available to us from just watching.

As engagement in modern educational dance demands creativity, this means the child has to be both choreographer and performer. In both these roles he will require theoretical knowledge and the ability to make aesthetic appraisals in a dance medium. But this knowledge and ability need be no different from that of the initiated observer. Furthermore, whether or not his performance as a dancer has aesthetic value will be decided by visual criteria. Although in dance there is perhaps more opportunity than in other P.E. activities to appraise and to enjoy the movements of others, while at the same time participating oneself (particularly during the stage of actually creating or working out a dance) this would not normally be thought to be sufficient to justify on its own the value of the activity as a participant one.

The satisfaction which must remain unique to the participant lies in his ability to create and to perform the dance and this is true not only of modern educational dance but many other forms of dance, for example, modern ballet. This will include exploring movement ideas, perfecting difficult sequences of movement, putting movement to music or rhythmical accompaniment, or conversely, letting the movements decide what the music or rhythm will be; using the imagination to convey dramatic ideas or social messages through gesture or letting the gestures contain their own message about the movements themselves; working with others where one can communicate and create in a joint enterprise through movement improvisation, and finally in achieving a dance performance that an audience can understand and enjoy.

Now, given the emphasis on justifying dance as a physical activity one may think it necessary to make the distinction in this list between the satisfaction to be gained as a performer and that to be gained as a choreographer. For it may be thought that the value of dance must be seen from the point of view of the former rather than the latter, but in practice this distinction may



not be easily made for in modern educational dance, the dance can come into being through movement improvisation, through the dancers' own exploration and not by a choreographer standing apart and telling the dancers exactly what movements to perform and what expressions to use. Very often even where a choreographer (usually the teacher) is set apart from the dancers (usually the pupils) there is interplay between them. The choreographer/teacher does not necessarily just ask the dancers/pupils to actualize a preconceived and previously notated dance (which he himself may not have created but only interpreted), rather he puts forward ideas to the class and helps them produce and develop their own motifs out of which the dance will emerge under the guidance of the teacher. If this kind of experience results in the development of the creativity and originality of the dancers (and this will be assessed by the quality of their dancing) we will consider him a successful teacher of modern educational dance.

Where the distinction between choreographer and the dancers is a rigid one it may be thought that the experience of the choreographer will be more significant than the experience of those just following his instructions. But I would argue that in fact both parties would miss out, the choreographer on the satisfaction that can only be gained from performing and the dancer on the experience that only comes from being creative. I have suggested that, at its best, modern educational dance allows for both kinds of experience.

However, it may be thought from an aesthetic point of view that the experience to be gained from performing, particularly once the dance has been created (however it was arrived at) is of less value than the experience of a person watching (whether this is the choreographer or the member of an audience). This is because, as we saw with other P.E. activities defined by aesthetic criteria, it can be argued that even if a dancer does enjoy performing, aesthetically speaking he is not necessarily experiencing the object that matters - the pattern of movements which can be observed from the standpoint of an audience. But, of course, the dancer, like the sportsman, can learn the fit between the movement which is visually good and what it feels like to perform it. This means, once the dancer has learnt to do this he can appraise his own performance aesthetically, he may not be in the best position or be the ultimate judge, but this does not stop him being in any position at all or being able to pass judgment with some degree of accuracy on his own performance. Indeed, it is quite possible for the experienced dancer, performing in front



of an ignorant audience to be a better judge of the aesthetic merit of his performance than those watching. (Similarly, with sporting activities which are in part aesthetic ones, it will be remembered the same argument can be applied to them. It is because, for example, that the competitive gymnast or ice skater is also able to aesthetically appraise their own performances they often have a good idea of how well they have done before the marks go up.)

However, as we have seen, this knowledge and ability is not exclusive to the performer. So again, in giving an aesthetic justification we have to look to that enjoyment which dancers (and, as we saw earlier some athletes engaged in aesthetic sporting activities) can have from engaging in the activity and from getting the movement aesthetically right: for that satisfaction is unique to them and it is a feeling which can often be correctly described as being at least in part an aesthetic one. This is particularly true for the dancer, because unlike most sportsmen, it will be a part of the overall experience of creating and producing something necessarily of aesthetic worth.

This means, firstly, the chances of aesthetic enjoyment can be greater for the dancer because his attention throughout will be focused on the manner of his performance as an end in itself and not just as a means, for example, to scoring a goal. While it may benefit the games player for his movements to become automatic, this will not be true of the dancer, who has to keep the expression of the dance alive. It is a satisfaction which can be said to be appropriate and truly deserved if he is aesthetically and artistically successful, and this is open to public testing. There is also the opportunity for the dancer, unlike the sportsman, to be able to experience through his imagination what he is doing aesthetically and/or artistically at an emotional level. The importance of the imagination in experiencing a work of art is often neglected in contemporary aesthetics, and, as I said earlier, this has been largely due to the fact that expression theory, in which the role of the imagination is most at home, has been generally discredited. But I also argued at the beginning of this chapter that the use of the imagination is crucial if we are to fully experience the work of art, and that expression theory at least does justice to this, and a certain version of it, may as Elliott argues (40) provide a better account of our experience of art than does objectivist aesthetic theory. For at least expressionists are not likely to forget the importance of what Elliott has described as the creative contribution of the subject (41) and would

not therefore deny of the dancer, that where his performance is the result of someone else's choreography, the dancer can 'live through' the feelings of the choreographer in a similar way that someone reading a poem may try and identify himself with the poet; and also that through the power of his imagination the dancer can identify with the character he is dancing or with the emotion implicit in the movements he is performing. Of course, I am not saying, that the dancer is, for example, sad, rather as Elliott argues the sadness is in him but not predicable of him(42).

Secondly, the dancer usually moves to and therefore has to attend to the musical accompaniment or to just rhythm. The opportunity is therefore open to him to enjoy the music by listening and responding to it, interpreting it in gesture and feeling the rhythm through the movements themselves.

Thirdly, because very often for the dancer the creation and performance of the dance is the result of a group enterprise, he is usually able while dancing to observe the movements of other dancers. Indeed, the dancer on stage may be in a much more exciting position for enjoying a dance production than the person watching, and while an audience can certainly respond imaginatively, by identifying with the dancers, the dancers themselves can respond to each other with the full expression and force of their own movements; they can enjoy dramatic and beautiful moments of the dance because they are a part of them.

Finally, it can be said that the same sort of points, with the possible exception of the last one can be made to a lesser extent about those other P.E. activities which are also defined by aesthetic criteria, particularly when they allow for creativity, like olympic gymnastic floorwork, synchronised swimming and ice skating.

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In the last two chapters I have examined the conceptual nature of those activities which fall under the title 'physical education'. I have argued that these activities can be rightly seen as falling into one conceptual group



because they have a sufficient amount in common for this to be done, namely, they are all:

1. physically performative having standards of excellence built into them, so that it is:
  - (a) necessary through learning and practice to reach a certain standard before one can engage in them at all,
  - (b) open to a performer in any one activity to reach such a high standard the value of his performance would have universal recognition as a human achievement;
2. where the point of these activities does not lie in effecting an instrumental end, but largely in the intrinsic satisfaction gained from participating in a physical activity as a physical activity.

In particular there is the non-detachable satisfaction from experiencing the interplay of different powers working together (for example, physical skill, strength and endurance, creativity, imagination, practical judgment and courage). I have also argued that more specifically there are two main kinds of intrinsic satisfaction, which together, taken either singly or jointly, characterise to a large extent the nature of all P.E. activities namely:

- (a) the satisfaction to be found from moving skilfully which provided the subject matter for chapter nine, and
- (b) the satisfaction gained through moving aesthetically and sometimes in actually creating an aesthetic object which provided the subject matter for this last chapter.

Now, in the final chapter I wish to look at how this common nature of physical education, just examined, can provide the content that will give us a theory of physical education and the considerable strength this will have in helping us to give a justification of physical education as physical education and for having it on the school curriculum.

# FOOTNOTES

- 1 See, for example, G. Schlesinger's article 'Aesthetic Experience and the Definition of Art', in British Journal of Aesthetics, 1979. pp.172-175. and R. Scruton, Art and the Imagination (London: Methuen 1974), chapter ten.
- 2 See, for example, R.T. Allen's article 'The Aesthetic Experience Again', in British Journal of Aesthetics (1970). And K. Price, 'What makes an Experience Aesthetic?', in British Journal of Aesthetics (1979).
- 3 I owe the use of this distinction between detachable and non-detachable satisfactions to C. New. See his article, 'Scruton on the Aesthetic Attitude', in British Journal of Aesthetics (1980).
- 4 I. Kant, Critique of Judgment, Fourth Moment, in Philosophers of Art and Beauty (The University of Chicago Press, 1976).
- 5 R. Scruton, op. cit., p.139.
- 6 See J. Stolnitz, 'The Aesthetic Attitude', in Introductory Readings in Aesthetics, ed. J. Hospers (The Free Press, 1969).
- 7 The difficulties of describing the aesthetic in terms of a special attitude are well illustrated by G. Dickie, see his article 'The Myth of the Aesthetic Attitude', in Introductory Readings in Aesthetics, ed. J. Hosper (The Free Press, 1969).
- 8 For example, D. Best writes: 'It is less conducive to error to regard the aesthetic as a concept than a content - as a way of perceiving an object or activity rather than a constituent feature of that object or activity.' 'The Aesthetic in Sport', British Journal of Aesthetics, Vol. 14 No.3 (Summer 1974) p.197.
- 9 'To see something as an aesthetic object is to see it and attend to it as an object worthy of attention in and for itself, for its own sake, in its own right quite apart from any instrumental use or practical purpose to which it may be put, or from any consequence that it may have -'



- D.N. Aspin, 'Sport and the Concept of the Aesthetic', in Readings in the Aesthetics of Sport, ed. H.T.A. Whiting and D.W. Masterson (Lepus Books, 1974) p.129.
- 10 'In an aesthetic situation we attend to what we perceive in what is sometimes called a "contemplative" way', L.A. Reid, 'Aesthetics of Education', in Readings in the Aesthetics of Sport, op. cit., p.6.
- 11 'When we take up the aesthetic attitude we attend to the forms of what we perceive in a sense 'for their own sakes', L.A. Reid op. cit., p.6.
- 12 See G. Dickie, Aesthetics: An Introduction, (1971) p.101.
- 13 G. Schlesinger, for example, in his article 'Aesthetic Experience and the Definition of Art', op. cit., says: 'it is not unreasonable to expect from an adequate definition of art that anyone possessing it would be sufficiently equipped, so that if, while wandering in a desert, he came across a load of paintings, books, literature and poetry he would be able to surmise that at least some of them were works of art.'
- 14 See pp.167-172.
- 15 R.W. Beardsmore, 'Two Trends in Contemporary Aesthetics', in British Journal of Aesthetics (1973) p.363.
- 16 Ibid., p.363.
- 17 R.K. Elliott, 'Aesthetic Theory and The Experience of Art', in Aesthetics, ed. H. Osborne (Oxford University Press 1972), p.149.
- 18 Ibid., p.155.
- 19 L.A. Reid, 'Aesthetics and Education', in Readings in the Aesthetics of Sport, ed. H.T.A. Whiting and D.W. Masterson. London. (Lepus Boods, 1974) p.11.
- 20 D.C. Meakin, 'Aesthetic Appraisal and Human Movement', in Physical Education Review, Vol. 2, No.1. pp.41-49. (1980).

- 21 Ibid., p.48.
- 22 D. Best, 'Philosophy and Human Movement', (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1978) p.110.
- 23 L.A. Reid, op. cit., p.19.
- 24 Ibid., p.17.
- 25 Ibid., p.6.
- 26 See Chapter nine.
- 27 See W. Charlton, 'Aestheticism', in British Journal of Aesthetics, Vol. 12. (Spring 1972).
- 28 D. Best, op. cit., p.112.
- 29 D. Best, op. cit., p.111.
- 30 See P.J. Arnold, Meaning in Movement, Sport and Physical Education (London: Heineman 1979) p.121.
- 31 D. Pole, 'What Makes a Situation Aesthetic?', in Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Suppl. Vol. XXXI (1957) p.102.
- 32 R. Scruton, op. cit., p.156.
- 33 H. Osborne, 'Odours and Appreciation', in British Journal of Aesthetics (1977) p.39.
- 34 C. New in his article op. cit., criticises R. Scruton's account on just this point, he says that as Scruton's criteria stand they would have to include someone watching a football match, a person imagining how a meadow might be converted in a housing estate, a lawyer listening to a case for which he has no brief.
- 35 This point is well argued for by J.O. Urmson in his article, 'What Makes an Experience Aesthetic?', in Proceedings of The Aristotelian Society, Suppl. Vol. XXXI (1957).



- 36 R.S Hepburn, 'Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty', in British Analytical Philosophy, ed. B. Williams and A. Montefiore (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1971).
- 37 Ibid., p.293.
- 38 Ibid., p.293.
- 39 R.K. Elliott talks about the sublime as an aesthetic aspect of sport. See his article 'Aesthetics and Sport', in Readings in the Aesthetics of Sport, op. cit..
- 40 R.K. Elliott op. cit., pp.154-155.
- 41 Ibid., p.157.
- 42 Ibid., p.147.

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## CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE JUSTIFICATION OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

### i INTRODUCTION

In chapter nine it was suggested that physical education could be taken as just a name that we use to refer to a certain group of activities and that it was quite possible to consider whether these activities could be rightly seen as coming into one conceptual group independently of any question of justification. I argued that for this purpose we would put physical education in inverted commas or substitute it with another title altogether if necessary, and I hope I have shown in the last two chapters that it is quite in order to put all the different P.E. activities into one conceptual group because the criteria they share are sufficiently central to all of them.

We are now therefore in a position to examine the quite separate question of justification, of considering whether the use of the actual title physical education which refers to these activities can also be justified.

The case we have to prove is that the term 'physical education', unlike the names given to other subjects (for example, engineering, cookery, computer science) can be used to fulfil two roles: firstly that it gives a conceptual group of activities that make up our subject a name (which it clearly does) and secondly that it can, at the same time, assert that these activities are of educational value.

To show that it can fulfil this second role we do not have to establish that all P.E. activities are educationally valuable for the same reasons. We would not, I think, expect this with any subject. Different areas are too diverse. We do not, for example, value German classical music for the same reasons that we value traditional jazz. There is no reason to think that there will have to be one peculiar P.E. ingredient, at the most, we may be able to show that the reason they are engaged in is for the non-detachable satisfaction they give the performer (for this, as we have seen, is the point of these activities) where this has a lot to do (although not everything) with their essentially physical character and where this refers to the performer's actual experience of bodily movements.

Now, in parts one and two I put forward and defended the meaning of education as: 'learning which promotes the development of the person qua person', more specifically I explained what might be understood as the development of the person qua person under three main headings - firstly, as a centre of experience, secondly, as a rational agent and thirdly, as a moral agent. In so doing, I have done full justice to the way education has been contrasted to training, where education cannot be understood in relation to preparation for an occupation or the fulfilment of a role but where its value can only be seen to the extent that learning actually changes the person qua person, for example, in terms of his conceptual understanding, his beliefs, attitudes, affective experience and dispositions to behave. I have also argued in part one, how important it is for a person to come to value certain things that he does, intrinsically, that is, because of the personal satisfaction they can bring him.

So, finally, in order to justify physical education, what I have to show is that learning to engage in P.E. activities can contribute significantly to the development of the person qua person. The contribution physical education can make to the development of the person will therefore now be looked at under the following headings:

- ii Physical Education and the Development of the Person as a Centre of Experience;
- iii Physical Education and the Development of the Person as a Rational Agent;
- iv Physical Education and the Development of the Person as a Moral Agent.

## ii PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSON AS A CENTRE OF EXPERIENCE

In learning to master different P.E. activities the person will come to conceive of what he is doing under a particular description, his understanding of them will be based on how he sees the point of what he is doing. We do not, for example, teach a person how to become physically skilful in different activities, like we train dolphins or performing dogs, for the activities cannot become intrinsically worthwhile for them. No doubt it would be possible to



get children to carry out difficult physical tasks in the same way that we train circus animals to perform tricks, where they had no awareness of what they were doing, except perhaps as a sequence of movements which brought about some reward at the end, but then we would be merely training not educating them.

Persons, unlike animals, conceive of physical activities in evaluative terms. They understand what they are doing in relation to a whole way of life, where the underlying distinction has already been made between what is instrumentally and what is intrinsically valued. Whether they engage in a P.E. activity or not, is not just dependent on the need for a reward but on their own judgment, where, how they evaluate it will depend on how they experience the activity affectively as well as conceptually. It is because of how a person experiences what we initiate him into, and not just because of what he comes to know that he is actually changed as a person, for the nature of his experience will inevitably affect his attitude towards different activities, the values he holds and how he determines his life. But, of course, this is still true even if everything a person learns to do is judged by him to be a waste of time and to be given up at the first opportunity. It is because in education we are concerned with a person's quality of life, that we hope he comes to find life worth living, that the reason we teach him different activities is not only for instrumental purposes (e.g. so he can cope with his financial affairs) although this is not to deny the importance of these purposes, but because we hope, in time, that he will find some of them intrinsically worthwhile, and that by learning to engage in them the person will find personal fulfilment and harmony, freedom of being and of expression.

It is with these kinds of considerations in mind, that one has to say that what finally counts in physical education is whether children come to gain any kind of personal satisfaction from learning to master and to engage in P.E. activities; although, of course, one is not saying that this has to happen straightaway, indeed it is highly unlikely until they gain a degree of proficiency in whatever activity they are learning.

#### THE NATURE OF THE SATISFACTION TO BE GAINED FROM ENGAGING IN P.E. ACTIVITIES

It is because the satisfaction gained from participating in P.E. activities is of non-detachable or intrinsic kind that an explanation of it can only be



given by referring to what characterises a particular activity - in other words as it is often said whatever any activity can offer will be unique to it. However, at the same time it would be wrong to think that the reasons why we value engaging in P.E. activities are as different as the activities themselves.

Now, there are those, like many P.E. practitioners, who are not philosophers, but who actively participate in sport and dance, who value the pursuit of P.E. activities and the initiation of children into these activities and who are extremely dissatisfied with the justifications which have been given for physical education in the past. They even feel at times that they have been betrayed, and this is because the values on which these justifications have been based are often no more than spin-off values. Furthermore, what completely perplexes the P.E. practitioners is that the values which lie, to continue the metaphor, in the spinning top itself, are not even mentioned. And if he does not have to wonder what these might be, it is not because of anything he has read on the philosophy of physical education, but because through his own intuition and first hand experience he already knows what they are.

The legitimacy of this kind of reaction from the active participant of sport and dance is reinforced by the fact that we have as our title: 'physical education'. For this suggests, at least to many of us, that the relevant educational values are P.E. ones, that is values which are inextricably caught up within physical education and not simply ones that can be realized in an incidental and fortuitous way through engaging in it. To illustrate this point consider what, in a similar way, is implied by terms like, 'music education' and 'history education'. For, these too would suggest that educational values are those ones which are essentially to do with music and history respectively. So that if someone tried to claim, for example, that we could justify talking about music education, only because, as a matter of fact, certain educational values, but which had nothing essentially to do with music, could be realized through learning to appreciate music, then we would rightly object that while this might justify having music on the school curriculum, it would not justify us talking about music education. And in a similar way, if someone claimed that the value of a person's history education lay in the fact that certain moral lessons could be learnt through gaining historical knowledge and understanding, we would want to argue that this



in itself does not justify us talking about a person's history education at all, but rather about his moral education through learning history. Justifications for physical education have often been of this nature. Consider the claim that is often made, for example, that moral lessons can be learnt through playing games and engaging in other kinds of P.E. activities. ( See pp.301-312 for a critique of this.)

It is, as I have already argued at the beginning of part three (see pp.190-198) possible and extremely necessary to explain the distinct, unique and, at the same time, universal nature of P.E. activities. But this cannot be done, as unfortunately it so often is by looking to those values which are at best secondary; and neither can it be done by focusing on those values which are primary, if this is done in a piecemeal way. Rather, what we need is a theory that will explain the nature of physical education as we understand it, from the point of view of the person who engages in it, a theory, which in the past we have tried unsuccessfully to do without. Now, there is a theory which lends itself to doing just this, and that is the theory of formalism which is already to be found in the philosophy of art and aesthetics.

There are several versions of this theory. For example, Kant argued that the object is beautiful not because of the sensations of representation but by virtue of its form. This, because it is contemplated disinterestedly can be distinguished from judgments of the pleasant and the good. Kant conceived aesthetic satisfaction as our consciousness of the harmony arising from the free play of imaginative powers.

Then, for Clive Bell, as well, the aesthetic value, for example, of a picture, did not lie in what was represented, this was aesthetically irrelevant. What mattered was 'significant form' and it was this which he described as giving rise to the grand aesthetic thrill, the correct response to significant form and which Bell distinguished from everyday emotion. But there are degrees of this kind of response and not everyone will experience it to the same extent. Even the critic, indeed, especially the critic, must experience this emotion for his judgment on a work of art to be a valid one. Only then can he enable others to respond correctly, if to a lesser degree. And this he will do by pointing out the relevant abstract features, for example, in a painting the combination and arrangement of lines and colours, in music the pure musical form.

Formalism as a theory of art has not been universally accepted, on the contrary, it is criticised if not totally rejected, on the grounds, for example, generally that it does not do justice to the importance of emotion and the artist's intention of what he intends to communicate to an audience; and more specifically, that with regard to significant form, that it ignores those instances of art where form and subject matter are fused or a picture is blatantly representational and where it is only this which determines the form. But these, fortunately, are not problems that have to be faced when it is used as a theory of physical education. And this is the task I shall turn to now.

First of all it can be said that P.E. activities have certain unique physical or kinaesthetic qualities (later just referred to as 'K' qualities), which are inherent and are independent of all extra-kinaesthetic notions.

Secondly, these qualities are only appreciated disinterestedly, by actually engaging in P.E. activities. What these qualities are will depend on such factors as the different kinds of skill required, the distinct aesthetic form of the movements themselves.

Thirdly, engaging in P.E. activities brings about the free inter-play of many different powers belonging to the performer; for example, his physical strength, skill and endurance; his ingenuity, intellect and practical knowledge; his creativity and his imaginative powers; and not least, his courage.

Fourthly, performing in different P.E. activities brings a unique kind of satisfaction, which arises from an awareness of the harmony which comes from the inter-play of these different powers. For many this harmony can be expressed in terms of the experiencing of physical well-being which only comes from the purposeful exercising of the human body, for others it may be understood as spiritual renewal, a special kind of freedom which comes from striving towards and reaching new standards of excellence.

Fifthly, the degree of intensity to which this satisfaction is experienced will vary. Not all participants will experience to the same extent this kind of satisfaction which is unique to physical education.



Sixthly, although the nature of this satisfaction will be based on a unique combination of different powers and the sense of harmony that comes from the release of these powers working together, nevertheless there are, as we have seen from the previous chapters of this final section, two main features which need to be given special attention, because they are sufficiently general so it can be said that together they characterise to a very large extent the nature of all P.E. activities (either jointly or singly) and also explain why we value them. These are:

the satisfaction which is gained from moving skilfully;

the satisfaction which comes from moving aesthetically and sometimes in creating an aesthetic object.

These will be looked at in turn.

(a) The Satisfaction to be gained from Moving Skilfully

First of all there is the satisfaction which is gained from moving skilfully. I have already argued in chapter nine that this is the point of sporting activities existing - that they are contrived to bring about an artificial end, for example, clearing the bar, because reaching this end demands physical skill, which is valued intrinsically and at its best is recognised as a human achievement. Although physical skill can be defined generally in terms of assessing how well a physical task is being carried out as a physical task, how we experience it will depend on the kinds of skill realized in any one activity and this means it will be dependent on the nature of the activity's physical objectives. What counts as skilful performance in one sport will be quite different from what counts as a skilful performance in another. In sport, not just because physical skill necessarily characterises it, but because it characterises it in such a central way, means that this kind of satisfaction will be predominant.

But is this true of dance? Here one might expect that the experience of moving skilfully would be less satisfying than the experience of moving aesthetically. But it should be remembered that dance as a P.E. activity is a participant one and this means it may not be possible to make the distinction in any clear cut way. For in performing a dance, in creating aesthetic effects, one has to be able to carry out a great number of difficult movements, where being able to move rhythmically and to music are extremely important. Dance therefore demands that the participant becomes physically skilful, indeed one could say the dancer has to master the movement of



his body as an instrument, just as the flutist has to master his. The aesthetic experience for the dancer therefore cannot be divorced from the experiencing of mastering and performing difficult sequences of movement, for the aesthetic expression is the movement and cannot be separated from it. This means that while the satisfaction for the spectator can just be explained in aesthetic terms, the satisfaction for the dancer cannot, the dancer's experience is therefore in some ways more like the experience of the skilful sportsman than the experience of those who are watching him perform.

There have been times when it has been argued that dance should not be found in a programme of physical education, and if it is, it should be removed and placed with the other performing arts or with other aesthetic activities. But there is no justification for this, while, of course, dance can be seen as a part of aesthetic education, and to some extent art education, (see the previous chapter pp 259-64) it also satisfies the conditions that enable it to count as physical education as well, for most forms of dance can be described as intrinsically worthwhile physical activities, requiring initiation before they can be mastered. In other words, dance can rightfully be said to belong in either category, and in practice this often turns out to be the case.

It is because P.E. activities are characterised by criteria of excellence that, firstly, one cannot be said to be engaging in the activities at all unless one has reached a certain standard (although in some activities after reaching this standard the participant may choose to go no further and simply value engaging in them as forms of play (see chapter nine, pp 206-207) and that, secondly, it is in the nature of all P.E. activities for the potential to exist for new standards to be reached by continually improving one's performance. To say the participant finds an activity intrinsically worthwhile is to say that he values what characterises the activity. This means participants of sport will come to value improving their own performance, realizing the activity at its best, even when perhaps, due to a lack of ability they have difficulty in doing either of these things. It is because the satisfaction comes from moving skilfully and sometimes aesthetically as well that the more physically skilful and the more successful in aesthetic terms one becomes, the greater should be the satisfaction gained from participating.



One practical consequence that follows from this is that the conflict between those who see physical education as education for leisure and those who see it as the pursuit of excellence should be resolved. For even the person who supports the idea that we are only educating for leisure must acknowledge that these activities are necessarily characterised by criteria of excellence, this means that if he is concerned (as he must be) that those who participate in P.E. activities come to find them intrinsically worthwhile, then he will want them to respect those standards, to improve their performance, so they can realize these activities as well as their ability allows. If the question of how well children perform does not matter to him (although obviously it would have to matter to begin with otherwise he could not get them to engage in the activities in the first place), one can only conclude that he is not concerned with the extent that children come to value them intrinsically after all, but only that they are provided with a form of amusement. If the activity is valued because of what characterises it one would expect there to be at least the desire to get better, and that those who have not got this desire have missed most of the point of the activity.

But all this is not to say it does not often have a recreative function; although contrary to what is often thought, whether physical education fulfils this function is not dependent on whether P.E. activities are just played at rather than taken seriously, participated in with dedication and the desire to pursue physical excellence, rather, it is dependent on the effect that engaging in an activity has on a person. Where we find recreation we find ourselves in a state of well-being, of feeling relaxed, refreshed, ready to take on the demands of living again. What, then, has recreational value, is often called value by contrast (1). Some activities, and these include sport and dance, (as well as many other kinds of pastimes) fulfil, for many people, this function and this is because they can be engaged in voluntarily with no sense of obligation. They need not encroach on the business of everyday affairs, far from being burdensome, they provide a break, a means of recreation, existing as they often seem to do, outside the world of social pressure and moral demands, P.E. activities can be seen for some to be, at least in certain respects, self-contained; but for others, however, the recreative value of P.E. activities may seem inapplicable, for example, for the professional games player because for him too much depends upon whether he plays and how well he plays.



But the point remains whether they do in fact serve a recreative purpose or not, does not depend on motive but the effect that they have on the participant. It is quite possible therefore for a professional player, or someone who is dedicated to sport and who is always training and improving his performance and for whom sport is not self-contained because it is his life, to find his sport extremely harmonious and a relaxing experience and for someone else who engages in sport for social reasons who has no overriding commitment, to find that for him this is a world of pressure which, in spite of himself, he cannot appreciate disinterestedly and which therefore makes him anxious and tense.

There is then absolutely no reason why those who advocate the importance of physical education as recreation have to undermine the importance of pursuing standards, of teaching children to become as proficient as possible in dance or in a particular sport. For, if P.E. activities are valued for what they are it will be a main aim for the teacher to get the children to become as skilful as possible so they can get the greatest satisfaction from engaging in them.

(b) Aesthetic Satisfaction to be Gained Through Engaging in P.E. Activities

The other main kind of satisfaction that P.E. activities have to offer is aesthetic satisfaction, and as we have already seen from the previous chapter, it can be said that there are many physical activities which require initiation if they are to be mastered and which are also essentially aesthetic activities.

It is because there are certain physical activities where the reason they are intrinsically valued is due to their aesthetic nature, that physical education can be justified because it contributes to a child's aesthetic education. The case can be put as strongly as this: certain aspects of physical education are aspects of aesthetic education. This is largely because, firstly, dance fulfils both sets of criteria that allow it to be legitimately regarded as a part of physical education and also as a part of aesthetic education (as well as, in some instances, as art education), and because, secondly, there are also other P.E. activities which are intrinsically worthwhile, which, because like dancing, they are defined by aesthetic criteria, these too may also help to contribute to a child's aesthetic understanding. But the claims we can make with regard to these latter activities are limited by the fact they are only in part defined by aesthetic criteria, being more strongly defined as sporting activities. In other words, in these activities their main value is derived from the



realization of physical skill and the satisfaction that they can bring. Here, aesthetic values (with the notable exception of ice dancing, which can be legitimately regarded in many instances as both a sport and as a form of art) are always secondary.

Then, with regard to all P.E. activities, whether these are necessarily or just incidentally aesthetic in character, we have to remember that we are trying to justify these activities as participant ones. This means, in making our case we have to rely on those values which are inherent in performing rather than just watching. So it is not enough to point to the aesthetic knowledge a performer can gain (for example of the principles or rules that govern the activity) or even to a person's ability to appraise and aesthetically enjoy dancing or different sporting activities. Although this knowledge and these abilities are important, it has to be recognised they could be gained just as well by theoretical instruction and observation only.

The main reason, then, that a case can be made for saying that P.E. activities and especially dance can contribute to a child's aesthetic education is because participating in them can bring satisfaction of a non-detachable kind which is aesthetic in character. This satisfaction comes from creating the aesthetic object or at least bringing it into being (which may, or may not, be a necessary consequence of engaging in a particular P.E. activity) and from experiencing the aesthetic object in a way only open to the performer, that is, through his kinaesthetic sense and the power of his imagination. For these kinds of satisfaction (like the satisfaction that comes from reciting poetry, playing music, performing in a play) are, as I have argued, just as important in a child's aesthetic and art education as studying or just contemplating different aesthetic forms and works of art.

The enjoyment that can come from fulfilling aesthetic criteria or gaining aesthetic satisfaction through movement is for many an experience sufficiently worthwhile that they would prefer to perform than to watch the movements of others, which may well be aesthetically better than what they can produce themselves. It should therefore be an important aim of those concerned with both physical education and aesthetic education to enable children to find out if this is true for them.

Finally, it can be said there is also in physical education the opportunity, through outdoor pursuits, for the enjoyment of natural beauty. This experience



may be enhanced by the satisfaction one may get from moving in one's surroundings. For example, M. Fisher writes, somewhat poetically, in her article, 'Sport As An Aesthetic Experience':

'When it is said that the surfer becomes one with the wave, or that a skier becomes one with the mountain, it is implied that the athlete has perceived nature in a special way ..... That is he enters into relation with nature by surfing it, by skiing it, by sailing it'. (2)

(c) The Value Attached to the Importance of Being and Feeling Fit

Now, there are, as I have already suggested, many other contingent reasons why P.E. activities are valued, in particular there is the value attached to being and feeling fit. Although this is not a necessary consequence, nevertheless, the connection between engagement and being physically fit is sufficiently strong empirically to say it is often an extremely important reason why people engage in sport and dance, and there are some physical activities like circuit training, jogging, weight training, keep-fit and aerobics, which are specifically designed for this purpose.

Now it is often argued that fitness, even as a medical rather than an educational aim of physical education, cannot be justified because fitness is a relative concept, it always makes sense to ask what it is a person is fit for. One can after all, it is argued, be fit enough to work in a shop but not fit enough to run 5,000 metres (3). Those who put forward 'fitness' as an aim of physical education are therefore said to be in fact advocating a high level of fitness and are often accused of assuming the value of an athletic way of life, but that if one had no intrinsic interest in pursuing physical activities in the first place then one would not see the point of becoming fit, where 'fitness' means in effect being sufficiently fit to engage in athletic pursuits. However, recent empirical research (4) has shown that fitness can be defined in physiological terms and that a certain level of fitness which can only be achieved through regular and fairly vigorous exercise may be necessary for the physical well-being of all of us, and particularly men, whatever our life styles, occupations and interests (5). H.B. Falls, for example, is, therefore able to distinguish between what he calls 'health related fitness' and 'performance related fitness' (6) where the former refers to 'those aspects of physiological and psychological functioning which are believed to offer the individual some protection against degenerative-type disease, obesity and various musculoskeletal disorders (7); and the latter



to 'those qualities of function that provide the individual with the ability to participate in sport activities with greater power, endurance, skill, etc.' (8).

We value fitness, that is health related fitness, not only because it gives a feeling of physical well-being but also because it does actually contribute to our physical well-being where, because it can be physiologically measured, fitness can be defined in scientific terms in relation to the efficient functioning of the human organism and therefore escapes the criticism that fitness is only a relative concept. Increasingly, scientific research has shown, for example, that a person who is fit is less likely to get coronary heart disease (9) and more likely to remain active for a longer period of his life, even into old age (10).

The value attached to engaging in P.E. activities and which necessarily brings about the interplay of so many different powers also then, lies beyond what necessarily characterises them. Other important reasons why they are valued include the love man has for competition, and more specifically, physical contest, of meeting a challenge and testing himself to the limit, of mastering an activity to the extent that this might be recognised as a human achievement; the satisfaction that comes from a person facing physical danger and overcoming it, from pitting herself against the elements, of making the right decision where her life or honour may depend upon it; the excitement that comes from her being in the drama of a game with the outcome always uncertain, of trying to prove herself better than others, to achieve superhuman strength and endurance; the delight that comes from being part of a team or group engaged in a co-operative enterprise and from outwitting her opponent through fine play, where this may involve not only physical skill but cunning, intelligence, tactical judgment, precision and style.

In part two, chapter eight, I argued that a person not only develops as a centre of experience but also as a rational and moral agent. I shall now look at both of these in relation to physical education. In the section below I shall deal with physical education and rational agency - and immediately after this (see pp.301-315) I shall look at physical education in relation to moral agency. But I shall leave the question of what implications our theory has for a person's development as a rational and moral agent to the following section.



### iii PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSON AS A RATIONAL AGENT

The importance of the contribution physical education might make to the development of the person as a rational agent is strongly argued for by D. Carr. In his article 'Aims of Physical Education' (11) he puts forward the view of education as the development of rationality, knowledge and understanding and from this he argues a case for physical education in the following way:

'Physical education activities have a definitive cognitive content, odd as it may seem, the practices commonly associated with the term 'physical activity' are as mental as they are physical. For an education in athletics, gymnastics, or outdoor pursuits, invariably involves instruction in rule-governed activities and initiation into modes of rational agency. Disciplined physical activity does indeed serve to promote the development of individual rationality, but the rationality it cultivates is practical, rather than theoretical or intellectual, and when a child has mastered a skill or some particular game, the knowledge he is then able to exercise is knowing how rather than knowing that, procedural rather than academic knowledge, but knowledge nonetheless' (12).

And later he says:

'Physical education then is something of a misnomer for an education in physical activities is a sort of education in rational agency' (13).

Carr argues that the reason why other philosophers like R.S. Peters, who at one stage conceived 'education' in the same way as himself, were unable to recognise the educational value of physical activities in these terms was because they had a limited view of rationality, they failed to see, what, he says, Ryle made much of that intentional action is just as much an expression of mind as the activity of theorising (14). Carr justifies P.E. activities because of what they necessarily bring about: mastery of skills and forms of practical knowledge. But Carr defines practical knowledge, 'knowing how' as practical reasoning (15), which seems curious when P.E. activities, that is at least those which are sporting activities, are essentially about the acquisition and the exercise of physical skill, so before considering his case further, we need to have a closer look at the meaning of 'knowing how' and what it might mean in relation to physical education.



(a) Physical Education, Knowing How and Knowing That

1. Knowing how:- Knowing how is usually contrasted with knowing that. The importance of making this distinction can largely be attributed to Professor Ryle (16). He argued that knowledge is not only exhibited in statements but in performance as well, providing that performance consistently comes up to certain standards or fulfils certain criteria (as such knowing how has a dispositional sense). But, if knowing how is to be distinguished from having the ability, not any kind of successful performance will do. Ryle recognised this. He ruled out habitual actions, rote learning, the flawless performance of animals and put much emphasis on the ability to innovate, to make judgments, to decide from an understanding of general principles rather than from rule of thumb. In short, action had to exhibit intelligence as well as ability if it was to be identified as a case of knowing how.

But while Ryle made the distinction between knowing how and mere ability, he has been criticised for not making the grounds for the distinction explicit enough and for not recognising that knowing how is open to many different interpretations. For example, behaviour which involves intelligence need not be done intelligently and there are ways of behaving which could not be described as intelligent, but which are not simply a question of habit either (like practising long jump) and there are some skills which may have become habitual but which involved intelligent behaviour in their acquisition (such as the movements used in driving a car).

Now Ryle also argued that a person can be said to know how even if he cannot theorise or describe what he is doing. He gives the example of the chess player. He says:

'his knowledge how is exercised primarily in the moves he makes or concedes and in the moves he avoids or vetoes. So long as he can observe the rules, we do not care if he cannot also formulate them' (17).

Furthermore, different moves and indeed two entirely different performances can exhibit knowledge of the same rules and principles of chess. But the game exhibits more than these, it also shows that the players have the ability to put their knowledge into practice, to apply the principles of the game according to the positions of the pieces on the board, and this ability is crucial, otherwise the performance is only indicative of knowing that, not



(a) Physical Education, Knowing How and Knowing That

1. Knowing how:- Knowing how is usually contrasted with knowing that. The importance of making this distinction can largely be attributed to Professor Ryle (16). He argued that knowledge is not only exhibited in statements but in performance as well, providing that performance consistently comes up to certain standards or fulfils certain criteria (as such knowing how has a dispositional sense). But, if knowing how is to be distinguished from having the ability, not any kind of successful performance will do. Ryle recognised this. He ruled out habitual actions, rote learning, the flawless performance of animals and put much emphasis on the ability to innovate, to make judgments, to decide from an understanding of general principles rather than from rule of thumb. In short, action had to exhibit intelligence as well as ability if it was to be identified as a case of knowing how.

But while Ryle made the distinction between knowing how and mere ability, he has been criticised for not making the grounds for the distinction explicit enough and for not recognising that knowing how is open to many different interpretations. For example, behaviour which involves intelligence need not be done intelligently and there are ways of behaving which could not be described as intelligent, but which are not simply a question of habit either (like practising long jump) and there are some skills which may have become habitual but which involved intelligent behaviour in their acquisition (such as the movements used in driving a car).

Now Ryle also argued that a person can be said to know how even if he cannot theorise or describe what he is doing. He gives the example of the chess player. He says:

'his knowledge how is exercised primarily in the moves he makes or concedes and in the moves he avoids or vetoes. So long as he can observe the rules, we do not care if he cannot also formulate them' (17).

Furthermore, different moves and indeed two entirely different performances can exhibit knowledge of the same rules and principles of chess. But the game exhibits more than these, it also shows that the players have the ability to put their knowledge into practice, to apply the principles of the game according to the positions of the pieces on the board, and this ability is crucial, otherwise the performance is only indicative of knowing that, not



of knowing how, and Ryle wanted to argue that knowing how cannot be reduced to knowing that and indeed preceded it.

But it is difficult to see why this has to be the case why, for example, could the two not go together? In fact it is clear for Ryle that knowing that is just a certain kind of knowing how, namely the ability to state facts, recite propositions, explain principles and to answer questions, etc.. But there are those who take the completely opposite view to Ryle and who ask why knowing how is not simply a case of knowing that plus the ability to put this knowledge into practice.

D.C. Brown, for example, in an article 'Knowing How and Knowing That, What' (18) criticises Ryle and suggests that what stands in need of explanation is how knowledge contributes to the ability and why this would justify calling the resultant whole itself knowledge. Brown's answer is to maintain that Ryle's account is wrong, that in fact knowing how is knowing that. He argues his case by distinguishing between two uses of knowing how: the Standard use and English use. In both cases knowledge is propositional and is dependent on the performer having the answers to embedded questions. These lie behind the indicative statement which describes what a person is doing. For example, if he is mixing mortar he is able to answer the question - how does one mix mortar? The questions in the Standard sense will relate to the manner of the performance, and in the English sense to the procedure or method used. Brown suggests that Ryle's achievement was not in realizing a different type of knowledge, but in showing that there is a kind of propositional content for knowledge, such that the knower need not be able to say what he knows, but exhibits his knowledge in performance. In other words, while there is one kind of knowledge there are two ways of ascribing it (19).

Now while I do not think Brown's position is defensible, (for it is not possible to discount all those cases where we use the term 'knowing how', where clearly what is being referred to is not propositional knowledge, for example, knowing how to ride a bicycle, knowing how to sing or play the piano - these are paradigms of knowing how, one cannot just ignore them or try to rule them out through linguistic stipulation) what can be accepted and which Brown's article does at least draw our attention to, is that, firstly, there are times where knowing how is indeed of a propositional nature. For instance,



to say one knows how a combine harvester works is simply to know that certain things are true; and secondly, that there are different ways of establishing whether a person has propositional knowledge or not and that one of these ways can be by observing and making a certain kind of judgment (see below) on a non-verbal performance.

Consider for example what is involved in knowing how to tie knots. It could be argued that this knowledge could be exhibited in a variety of ways by actually tying the knot, by telling someone else how to tie the knot, by drawing diagrams to show how the knot is tied. In these three instances it could be argued the same propositional knowledge is being exhibited.

However, and this is the point I am making, there is still a difference between the person who can only tell someone else how to tie knots or draw diagrams of the knots and the person who can actually tie them. In this example, and there are countless others, it would not help to add the word 'to' in order to distinguish between the two kinds of knowledge. For both the person who ties the knot and the person who tells someone else what to do know how to.

Often knowing how has a demonstrative element, it is characterised by the fact that one has knowledge of particulars. For example, in driving one knows which button to push, when to de-clutch, where to indicate, etc.. A person may have this very particular kind of knowledge without being able to generalise it, he just knows, he does not have to work it out from general principles first. The point is illustrated well by an example A.D. Munrow gives in his book, 'Physical Education: A Discussion of Principles'. In the chapter called 'Intellectual Education Through Physical Education', he writes:

'A man who learned to sail in his forties employed in his learning processes a great deal of what the Americans call "skill sessions", reading books and studying diagrams. His young son meanwhile just messed about in boats and learned through "the pores of his skin". The father sailed as crew to his son in his first race and asked him whether he knew what manoeuvre he would have to execute to alter course as he rounded the first mark. The young boy, busy with immediate problems, replied, "No I don't, but shut up, I'll know when I get there," a reply which turned out to be perfectly true!' (20)

Knowing how, then, is ambiguous. It can just be propositional knowledge, for example, he knows how the fire started; but not always, and when examining what we mean by knowing how, this is not primarily what we are



interested in, particularly in relation to physical education. A person may be able to tell someone else how to dive but we would not for this reason say he knew how to dive.

It is well known that learning many physical skills involves understanding and following instructions. The performer has to learn the right way of doing something, he has to be able to recognise mistakes, he has to know how he can put them right. So when a person does perform correctly, we can assume that he has all this sort of procedural knowledge which is of a propositional kind. But, of course, a person can have all this knowledge without also having to be able to perform. In vaulting for instance a person can know what the movement should look like, perhaps he can break the skill down into its component parts so he knows what his arms and legs should be doing at any moment in time, but he still cannot perform the vault. He may, of course, through giving instructions be quite capable of getting someone else to do it. Now, to say both the instructor and the performer knew how would be unfortunate because this is just the place where we would want to say, only the person who actually did the vault 'successfully' or 'correctly' knew how.

It is clearly necessary to look at the difference between theoretical and practical knowledge in another way for there clearly is an important distinction between knowledge understood in a propositional sense and knowledge which is practical or is understood in an ability sense. Perhaps the distinction may be best described in terms of knowledge for which verbal evidence is crucial and knowledge for which it is not (21). The former being to do with knowing certain things to be true, the latter being concerned with performing correctly, and it is to the latter I want to turn now.

2. Practical knowledge where performance is all important:- If saying a person is able to do something means no more than 'can do' then knowing how means more than having an ability. For a person can bring about a result as a causal agent but we would not for this reason wish to say he knew how to do it. For example, a person could, accidentally, cause the bringing about of a series of events which resulted in a successful outcome (for example a player could inadvertently press the right button at the right time in a computer game enabling him to beat an opponent).

What else then is required?



First of all knowing how implies success where 'success' is being used in the sense of coming up to a mark, getting it right, being correct. (See chapter two pp.37-38.) Now being able to can also imply this as the example above illustrates, but not always; it depends on how what one is able to do is qualified. When it is qualified by an achievement verb it does imply success, but this does not always have to be the case. A person can be able, for example, to type, but show by the way he does it that he does not know how, because he does it so badly (22).

Secondly, as Ryle draws our attention to knowing how implies having a disposition. For if a person was able to do something, even if that something was recognised as coming up to the mark, we would have to be convinced he was not simply lucky or that he did not just act as a causal agent in effecting a result.

Thirdly, knowing how involves learning, it requires some kind of initiation, however simple, although this is not to say a person could not initiate himself (see below). I. Scheffler argues that knowing how is arrived at only through training and that it is only appropriate to talk of knowing how to do something if one could have been trained to do it (23). But this is to go too far, for there are plenty of things, like skipping, which we know how to do but for which we may not have received any training. Now there are many things we do successfully, and consistently successfully, which we would not wish to say we knew how to do. For example human beings are able to stand upright and move naturally in certain ways (e.g. walking and running); birds are able to migrate and to fly consistently well, but we would not want to say they knew how, unless we were prepared to use the term very loosely indeed, for we usually want to rule out instinctive and natural behaviour even when it can be said to fulfil 'success' criteria.

In the case of animals it is only when they start to carry out tasks which previously they were unable to do, where this is not the result of instinct or maturation, that some think it appropriate to say that what they are doing they know how to do, in a similar way that while some do not, many do, consider it appropriate to say that animals learn how to do certain things (24). Here, Scheffler's point that knowing how is the result of training may seem relevant. We would not, I think say that dolphins knew how to move through the water but some might wish to say they knew how to jump through the hoop.



If we do baulk at this - applying knowing how to animal behaviour, I think it is because, strictly speaking, we only consider it appropriate to say a person knows how because we only consider persons can be held responsible for what they are able to do (see chapter five pp.111-113). After all, a robot could successfully perform a task and where this was not a question of luck, but where it would not be the result of initiation, although we could say that it was the result of it being programmed. Now, this is important, for it is because the robot cannot be said to learn how to perform a task (unless, that is, one is prepared to operate with an entirely mechanistic concept of learning, again see chapter two pp.40-41, that we would never consider saying it knew how; and the same is true of animals where their performance is the result of strict conditioning. In these cases neither the robot nor the animal could be said to be responsible for what they have 'done'. In fact we could argue this is because they have not done anything at all. Although the performances could be judged within a context of what counts as successful action, where there is the possibility of failure and where it is possible to judge if there is consistent success in the results that are brought about, we would not think it appropriate to congratulate them (or, at least, we would think it more appropriate to congratulate their trainer!). In a similar way, if we contrived a jumping competition for frogs and as a result of the competition we could find the frog that could jump the furthest, we would not think it had done well, any more than the rat that is first to find its way through the maze, for neither the frog nor the rat could be held to be responsible for their 'success'.

Now I am using 'responsible' here, as I explained in chapter five, to imply what is brought about is the result of intentional human action and not causal agency. Knowing how, I would argue, as indeed Carr has done on logical grounds (25) presupposes the idea of intentional human action. Although a person may not know why he is successful, or even what movements he is performing, he must know what he is doing, where this refers to recognisable actions or activities. We congratulate persons and, in spite of what I have said to the contrary, sometimes animals as well, when we see them being consistently successful because of their mastery of a particular action or activity, providing we think they are acting intentionally.

The fact that knowing how implies the learning and mastery of something does not, of course, mean that there is only one way of learning how to do it,



for example, being taught a procedure and then being shown how to put it into practice, it is quite possible for someone to learn how to perform sequences of movement just by watching and copying someone else doing them. Usually, however, coming to know how to do something does involve applying oneself to the task in hand, understanding what is required of one and practising it until one gets it right, but this does not have to be the case. Although a person does have to understand what is expected of him, there is no reason why a person has to find it difficult (although the nature of many practical activities is such that most people usually do), it is possible for a person to be successful the first time he does something without it being a question of luck. We usually describe this as 'natural' ability, but if we do we should be careful to realize it is still a learnt ability, it is not like natural abilities that are instinctive or the result of maturation, they are still the result of initiation, of what we do, rather than a question of what we undergo or what happens to us. Furthermore, it is assessed within a particular context, where there are particular reasons other than biological ones for assessing a person's performance, for acknowledging the degree of difficulty, the right way of doing something and the possibility of failure.

Finally, it can be said that unlike evidence for a person knowing that, evidence for deciding whether a person knows how will not be based on reasons to do with truth, but with whether his performance fulfils certain criteria, where what those criteria are, will depend on the activity in question. For example, in sport generally, as we saw in the previous chapter, these criteria will be concerned with how well and how consistently a physical task is carried out as a physical task. For example, we decide whether a person knows how to do a backward somersault, by judging his performance according to the criteria of what constitutes such a somersault and where appropriate a good or excellent one.

3. Summary:- To summarize it can be said that knowing how in its ability sense implies:

- (1) the performance comes up to a mark, in this sense it is 'successful' or 'correct' ;
- (2) the performance will not be successful or correct through chance or accident;



- (3) the ability to perform will be the result in the first instance of some kind of initiation, however simple;
- (4) the performance can be described as being constitutive of intentional human action or actions;
- (5) the performance will be assessed on other criteria than those to do with truth and will depend on the activity or action in question (for example in relation to sport in general how well difficult physical tasks are carried out).

4. Knowing how and physical education:- If we now turn to physical education we can conclude that if knowing how is taken in its propositional sense (where verbal evidence is crucial) P.E. activities do involve a great deal of knowledge of this kind. The knowledge which is required being very often largely instrumental in enabling the person to know what to do in order to carry out difficult sequences of movement. It therefore tends to be of the particular and not demand an understanding of theoretical principles. A person may learn to swim faster because someone else, scientifically, is able to come up with a better technique, but of course the swimmer does not need to know why it works, and conversely the scientist does not have to test the theory himself to prove his theory is correct. Sometimes the development of a technique is the result of trial and error, like effective bowling in cricket, and then scientists may try and explain why a way of doing it is so successful, but the bowlers have not got this knowledge just by dint of being successful.

Nevertheless, while the sportsman's knowledge is of the particular, rather than the general, the extent of his knowledge should not be underestimated. Physical education is often written about as if it involved no more than a few knacks and the learning of one or two rules. Nothing could be further from the truth; while some activities like running and skipping can be mastered with little understanding of what one's movements consist of, most P.E. activities demand an understanding of complicated procedures. As Carr has drawn our attention to coaching would be impossible without this (26). And, of course, Carr is also right in saying that learning to engage in these activities presupposes practical discourse, the possession of a common public language (27).

In learning to master a skill a performer has to understand what he has to do, when, where, how, etc., in short, what exactly is required of him (although he can still have this understanding and still not be able to do it, as anyone who has tried to learn a sport for which he has no natural ability knows only too well). But where a person is successful it is not impossible that once a technique has been learnt the skill remains while the procedures, the practical directives, are forgotten. But I would accept that in physical education which involves the continual business of teaching and learning, this is unlikely to occur; even when someone has mastered an activity to the extent that he is at last able to engage in it, it is still open to him to improve his performance and this is often done by learning new and better techniques as well as by improving old ones (although as I mentioned above, the athlete/performer does not need to know why these techniques work).

Clearly physical performance does provide evidence that a person who performs correctly has a considerable body of knowledge. But this knowledge is propositional which means, for example, that the person who dances the galliard exhibits the same knowledge (where knowledge is being used in its propositional sense) as the one who notates it and which could in principle be described verbally. But of course what we are interested in when looking at practical knowledge or knowing how in relation to physical education, where our interest is in practical activities that are participated in, is that kind of knowledge where verbal evidence is not sufficient for us to say a person knows how but where other criteria concerning the performance itself have to be fulfilled. Namely to summarize again:

the performance has to be correct or successful; it must not be carried out by chance or accident; the ability to perform will be the result of some kind of intention, however simple; the performance can be described as being constitutive of intentional human action; the performance will be assessed on other criteria than those to do with truth, and these will depend on the action or activity in question.

Judging whether a person knows how, then, can only be decided in relation to the particular activity in question. Now, in individual P.E. activities, Carr argues that there is a considerable demand for practical reasoning, both



in the learning and pursuing of them, but I would maintain that it is not on this basis, at least, not on this basis alone, that we can say someone knows how in physical education.

I have already argued (see chapter nine) that what is distinctive of P.E. activities is not the demand for practical reasoning but physical skill and the realization through movement, at least in some P.E. activities of aesthetic values as well. Now, with regard to the concept of physical skill, I have already analysed it in some detail and argued that it can only be assessed in terms of how successfully and consistently a physical task is being carried out as a physical task, and where of overriding importance will be the degree of difficulty involved in carrying out the task which can be assessed in terms of (a) the standard of the opposition, (b) the physical techniques demanded by the sport, (c) our physical constitutional make-up. (See pp.217-221.)

However, on Carr's account the meaning of knowing how seems to be restricted to what is implied by practical reasoning, so that it would not be on the basis that P.E. activities are characterised by the realization of physical skill by those engaging in them that one could say they demonstrated practical knowledge, but only on the basis that they could be said to exhibit the exercising of rationality. (He uses the terms practical reasoning and the exercise of rationality interchangeably.) But I can, however, see no justification for limiting the meaning of knowing how in this way. There is, as I argued above, an important distinction to be made between propositional knowledge for which verbal evidence is sufficient and practical knowledge for which it is not. For although practical reasoning can be correctly described as practical knowledge (for example diagnosing an illness or judging where to place the ball or the best way to hold the racket) so can many other kinds of human abilities like singing, throwing a ball, diving, riding a bicycle not characterised by practical reasoning (although this is not to say it was not required in their acquisition).

So while I would accept that P.E. activities are about knowing how it would not be for the reasons Carr gives. For on Carr's account, although he puts physical skill at the centre of the meaning of physical education (he says, for example, instruction in physical skills is not the aim of physical education, it is physical education (28)) nevertheless, according to Carr

it is only because they require the exercise of rationality, particularly while they are being learnt, that physical education can be described as a form of practical knowledge.

But my argument is if P.E. activities were essentially about practical reasoning then the coach described in the last chapter who tells the players what to do is in an important sense playing the game; if cognitive skills rather than physical ones were all important to P.E. activities then games which involve no more than the pushing of buttons to make electronic men perform the right action should also be a valuable way of teaching physical education. Now, as I have already acknowledged, it is not that engaging in P.E. activities does not necessitate practical reasoning (the degree to which it is required varying according to the activity: middle distance running requires a little, playing tennis a fair amount and conducting an orienteering expedition a great deal) but that what is distinctive of P.E. activities, at least those which are sporting activities, is not the demand for intellectual but physical skill.

Of course it would not be impossible for us to devise an activity like chess, but where in order to move the pieces, as well as keeping to the rules of chess, one also had to first execute difficult physical movements but this would just mean the activity could be described either way: as a sport or as an intellectual activity. In fact I think if one is misled into thinking Carr's thesis to be at all plausible it is because he does not distinguish sufficiently between cognitive and physical ability. The distinction is at least blurred because both are described as just 'skill' (29).

I am not, then, denying that engaging in P.E. activities does not depend on a great deal of cognitive ability for example practical reasoning in an orienteering expedition. But the point is that someone being pushed in a wheel chair could exhibit exactly the same ability as the person who is also running. It is not that practical reasoning is not a definitive part of orienteering as indeed it is of many, if not most sports, but rather if orienteering only involved practical reasoning it would no longer be a sport but an intellectual activity. I will have to conclude, therefore, that while P.E. activities are about knowing how, this does not enable us to say that they are essentially about practical reasoning.



However, I still consider that physical education can be shown to contribute to a person's development as a rational agent but not especially for the reasons Carr gives, rather I think a much stronger case can be made for physical education by looking at our development as rational agents in terms of being self-determining, capable of choice, making decisions and acting on them, in short, in terms of being evaluators.

(b) Physical Education and the Development of the Person as an Evaluator

It will be remembered from chapter two part one, that I used Taylor's argument that persons can be distinguished from the higher primates not because they have first order desires but because they have second order ones(30). This means they can evaluate their desires, they can make qualitative evaluations, they can see the stronger desire is not necessarily the better one(31). As an evaluator, a person can be said to develop, not only because of his increased knowledge of the alternatives open to him, but also because of the extent to which he comes to value them, choose between them and turn them into action. Education, then, must be about giving the child a range of activities to choose from, in the hope that he will find some of them intrinsically worthwhile. Obviously what these are will be subject to practical considerations of what is suitable for him and what is already available and valued by the society in which he lives.

Now, J. White in his first book 'Towards A Compulsory Curriculum', (32) also argues a case for initiating children into a whole range of activities that they might want to choose for their own sake. In chapter two he says:

'we do not know for any child on the threshold of education what the good will consist in for him. This follows from its subjectivity. But we do know, in formal terms, what his good will be. We know that only he can be in a position to determine this; and we know that he can determine this when he is in the "ideal" situation, or making allowances for the unrealizability of this ideal, when he is as close as possible to this ideal situation'.(33)

To do this he must satisfy as far as possible the following conditions:

'he must know all the possible things he may want to choose for their own sake, and he must be ready to consider what to choose for their own sake, and he must be ready to consider what to choose from the point of view not only of the present moment but of his life as a whole' (34).



In considering on what grounds activities should be a compulsory part of the school curriculum - and those which should not, White makes an important distinction between 'those activities in which no understanding of what it is to want X is logically possible without engaging in X' (category I) and those where some understanding of what it is to want X is logically possible without engaging in X (category II) (35). It is only those activities that fall into category I that could be assured a place on a compulsory school curriculum, although those that come into category II may be allowed to figure in a voluntary one.

In order to show that someone has an understanding of X it is sufficient that he can identify it, either by giving a correct verbal account sufficient to distinguish X from other things, or by giving a correct identification of cases of X (36). White gives several examples to illustrate these conditions; on the one hand, understanding what it is to communicate, engaging in pure mathematics and the physical sciences, appreciating works of art, philosophising; and on the other, climbing a mountain, speaking a foreign language, playing cricket, cooking, painting pictures. Only the former would require getting the children to actually engage in them before they could have any understanding of them. He says, for example:

'a person incapable of speech lacks the concepts either to explain what communication is or be able to pick out examples of people engaging in the activity. But someone who has never climbed mountains can both give some kind of correct description of mountaineering and point out examples of it' (37).

On White's account, then, all P.E. activities would come into his second category for we can gain some understanding of them, at least to the extent of being able to identify when they are going on, without having to learn to engage in them. And one might add that as an informed spectator one could gain an enormous amount of understanding. Now, White considers that this understanding is sufficient to enable the person to know if these are activities he would want to choose to do for their own sake.

But how would this understanding be sufficient? Surely what is important is not just that we are able to identify the alternatives. What is at issue here is how children can be put in a position where they know what might be intrinsically worthwhile for them, what might bring them personal satisfaction



of a non-detachable kind. But how can children possibly know if they are going to find an activity intrinsically worthwhile if they have never experienced the actual doing of it? If what matters is the satisfaction an activity might bring them then no amount of understanding will enable them to know what they will find and not find satisfying, if that understanding is limited to just being able to recognise the activity is going on. Indeed, even if like the informed observer, they understand a lot about what was going on, for example, in a game of cricket, this would not help, for no amount of theoretical understanding could replace the experience of playing.

White in fact recognises that objections of this kind would be made about his account, that, for example, the cricket devotee will argue that one cannot understand what it is to play cricket until one has had plenty of experience of playing it. However, White argues this kind of discussion is beside the point. He says:

'what should be at issue is not whether one can gain a full understanding of cricket without playing it, but whether one can have some understanding of it, as measured by the two criteria laid down, that one can is surely indisputable' (38).

But why should this be what is at issue? Why should we accept these kinds of criteria? For the only justification we have for doing so is whether this understanding is sufficient for a person to be in a position to choose between alternatives and my argument is that it is not. But this is not for the reason that White suggests others might put forward: that it is only by engaging in the activity like soccer that one can find out more of what it involves (for as I have already said, we can increase a child's understanding of a game simply by turning him into a very knowledgeable spectator and not by having to get him to engage in it). Rather it is because it is only by the child experiencing what it is like to engage in different P.E. activities that he will be in a position to know if they could be intrinsically worthwhile for him.

Children can be very impressionable, it is because, given the popular media and the commanding position sport has in our society that children can identify with ease, with the footballer, the mountaineer, the deep sea diver, the tennis player, the arctic explorer. Indeed they can come to idolise sportsmen, athletes and dancers, they often become extremely informed about



what these people can do, on the basis of this understanding they may well think that they would like to be a mountaineer or to engage in deep sea diving or to play tennis professionally. For it all looks exciting when it is done well and children usually have plenty of opportunity to watch sport carried out at its best; if this was all they had to go on how quickly they would become disillusioned. For it is only by experiencing these activities first hand that one will discover, firstly if one is any good at them: it is difficult to find an activity intrinsically worthwhile if one is unable to master it or if one is only ever able to do it badly; and secondly, if one will find them satisfying and this depends on all kinds of affective considerations. To state the somewhat obvious, identifying with the mountaineer on the television in the warmth of one's own sitting room is quite different from how one would feel if one was actually climbing the mountain. Skiing, parachute jumping, diving can all look exhilarating until one actually tries to engage in them.

And, of course, it can work the other way, children may on seeing a game of cricket going on consider it is an extremely boring game, but if they learnt to play they may find it extremely demanding and personally satisfying; or they may think canoeing is a very dangerous sport and that they would be much too frightened to enjoy it, but once they had learnt how to do it and become highly proficient they could find it becomes for them a lifelong pastime.

All teachers know (and not only P.E. teachers) that children can have strong ideas about whether they are going to like an activity long before they learn to engage in it and this can be the case even if these ideas are based on a great deal of correct information they have about the activity. But after they start actually engaging in it and gain some expertise they can change their minds, they can decide the activity is for them after all, or conversely, that it should be given up at the first opportunity.

At this stage it might be felt that there is a serious practical problem with my account, in that even if one agreed that all activities have to be engaged in before one can possibly be in a position to know what one might find intrinsically worthwhile, one might question how this could help us decide what should be on the school curriculum and what should not. For surely not all activities that a person might conceivably find intrinsically worthwhile



could appear on the curriculum, even if that was extended to include a non-compulsory one.

In answer to this one, I would make the following points:

Firstly, in suggesting physical education can be justified because it can contribute to learning which promotes the development of the person qua person, I am presupposing that it will require initiation. There are plenty of activities, and this includes physical ones, that are trivial or very simple and can be picked up without there being any necessity for them to be engaged in in an educational institution. These would be clearly ruled out.

Secondly, one has to accept, I think, that in giving the kind of educational justification I have, that when it comes down to the practical questions of what should actually feature on the curriculum that socially relative considerations are decisive (39). It depends, in the case of physical education on what sporting activities and forms of dance are already popular and generally valued, the reasons for which may well be historical and international. It also depends on what facilities are available in school and in society at large and this may depend on other kinds of factors, for example, financial and geographical ones.

Thirdly, there are considerations of a moral kind; there are, for example, activities which could be discounted on grounds of cruelty. We would not initiate children into gladiator fighting and we might think twice about some forms of boxing, American football, ice hockey and blood sports. We would certainly make some distinctions on the grounds of sex when deciding what sports children should engage in.

More specifically, it may be possible to show that certain P.E. activities actually make a positive contribution to the development of the person as a moral agent. And this now needs to be looked at.

iv PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE PERSON AS A MORAL AGENT

Whether physical education can contribute to a child's moral development can be argued for in one of two ways, that is either intrinsic or extrinsic reasons can be given. Although by far the most numerous ones have been of the latter kind, an interesting attempt at a justification using intrinsic reasons is made by D. Aspin.

In his article 'Ethical Aspects of Sport and Games and Physical Education' (40), he argues the case:

'it is possible for one to treat the whole topic of games and sports, not as means to promote the ends of moral education, but as being, in certain respects, activities necessarily underpinned by and shot through with presuppositions that are of an irreducibly ethical character'. (41)

He continues:

'They may therefore, to some extent, be regarded as moral enterprises, engagement in which is actually part of moral value and thus capable of being included in the educational programmes of those who seek to get young people started on the business of acting according to moral principles "off their own bats" so to speak' (42).

(a) Are Games and Sports Necessarily Moral Enterprises?

Now can games and certain sports be correctly described as moral enterprises? And enterprises that are necessarily moral because of the presuppositions on which they are based? One has only to recall the kind of evidence we now witness on the football field (as well as on the terraces) and the rudeness that has become an increasingly common occurrence on the tennis court, the ruthlessness which more often than not characterises motor racing, to wonder how Aspin could make such bold a claim.

Can, as he suggests, 'authority, freedom, equality, fairness and justice, tolerance, dignity and magnanimity' really be said to be 'implicit' in and to lie at the root 'of all major games' (43)? And if they are to be found there, why is it possible for the players to so wilfully disregard them and yet still be able (and this is the point that counts) to play the game.



Now, of course, it is logically true that in order for someone to be said to be playing he must be playing according to the rules and not, for example, be deliberately breaking them. But this does not necessitate the player has to have a particular attitude towards his opponent (for example a magnanimous one) or that he has to have honourable motives for playing. It is unfortunately quite possible for someone who plays fairly, in that he keeps the rules impeccably, to have no regard for his opponent where his main intention may be to humiliate him.

It is also true that in spite of the moral ideals that inspired and have since been associated with the Olympic Games, there is no reason why games, because they are games, should realize these ideals. Indeed, it is because their realization is dependent on the motives of men that much which has been written on the moral worth of the games should by now be the source of some embarrassment; for they have not only been used to bring about moral ends such as promoting friendship between athletes, strengthening international ties, they have also been instrumental in bringing about ignoble ones, for example, the demonstration of superiority of one nation over another. And it is the recollection of those Olympic Games which have been used to secure political ends, for example, the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin and the 1956 Melbourne Games, which has led writers like Alex Natan to talk of nationalism being sport's deadliest enemy (44). The events of the last two Olympic Games would not have altered their opinion.

One has only to consider examples such as these to wonder how one could possibly defend the view that there is something necessarily moral about engaging in sport.

However, Aspin might wish to argue that he would not deny games can be misused, but this does not affect his argument - that they are in themselves moral enterprises; because, he says, in agreeing to play, the players have to be willing 'to be bound by the sorts of ethical considerations upon which the game fundamentally rests and that they understand what it is, so to do' (45). Indeed, he tries to use the fact that players (and his point could also be applied to others, for example, those who sponsor them) do disregard the moral nature of the games to prove his argument. For, he also says,

'it is because this happens (players deliberately try to break the rules while remaining undetected), that we are so morally outraged, for example at the behaviour of a Pereira or a Colin Meads'. (46)



Aspin argues that what happens in cases like these is that:

'all the normal principles that underpin inter-personal transactions of any sort - equality of consideration, fairness, consideration of interests, personal respect - have been unilaterally disregarded, suspended or just overturned. Sports and games activities, like any other activities seem to me to come under the same sort of moral umbrella; what applies to personal conduct in general applies a fortiori (since voluntarily entered into under the overt declaration of acceptance of and adherence to the rules) to our conduct in sports and games' (47).

But of course it is always (as Aspin himself admits) possible to apply moral criteria in any inter-personal situation. For any inter-personal transaction, indeed, any human action is open to moral judgment. This is because as I argued in chapter five, persons, as rational agents, living in society are always morally accountable for what they do. But this does not mean we are justified in describing every human action or inter-personal activity as moral. Very often the question of whether what a person is doing is moral or not (whether in terms of his motive, the consequences of his action or in terms of social justice) just does not arise. And even when it does, this may not mean we are justified in describing the actual activity as a moral one. Scientists engaged in research may be morally accountable for what they are doing but this does not make their activity necessarily moral. Although they may well be asked to answer moral questions about their methods and their findings, and rightly so, still, as far as the scientific research is concerned, the questions they will be answering will be scientific ones.

Similarly, members of an orchestra have to co-operate with one another, agree to abide by certain rules of procedure and to accept the commanding authority of the conductor (the musician who plays out of tune in order to wreck a concert will inevitably have to face the moral wrath of his fellow musicians). But there is still no reason why, just because playing in an orchestra is an inter-personal affair, where, because of this, moral problems and questions will inevitably arise, that it has to be necessarily understood as a 'moral activity' or that it must be seen to come under 'the moral umbrella' or be put into 'a moral category' and this is true even though it is often the case that we applaud musicians not only for the performance they have given but because of what we know about them as persons, for example, we may applaud their dedication, their industry and courage, as well as their musical skill, imagination and sensitivity.



The same is often true in athletics and sport. As I have already acknowledged (48) our admiration for the great athlete or sportsman is often moral admiration; we know the personal qualities that were necessary for an athlete to achieve the degree of physical excellence that is being exhibited in an athletic competition or in a game, but this does not mean the athletic competition, any more than scientific research or playing in an orchestra, is itself a moral enterprise.

Crucial to Aspin's argument is the fact that games are activities mutually enjoyed and which can only be engaged in with the co-operation of those one is competing against (as well as, where this is applicable, one's own team members), and where engagement is dependent on keeping to rules which enshrine general principles which, Aspin argues, are moral ones. He says: 'Sport and games are not so much paradigm cases of moral habits in action, but, rather that moral principles of one sort or another are actually part and parcel of their make up'. (49) And he also comments, 'if one plays games or takes part in any form of sporting or athletic activity, of necessity, one must stick to certain moral principles'. (50)

Now of course one cannot disagree that playing games is dependent on everyone playing according to the rules but one can question whether doing so implies the acceptance on the part of the players of moral principles.

What I suspect is that Aspin has taken the formal principles on which our understanding of the meaning of a rule qua rule rests and turned them into substantial moral principles. Take for example the principle of fairness. This in itself is a purely formal principle, one described by R.S. Peters in 'Ethics and Education' 'that no distinctions should be made unless there are relevant differences' (51). Now, it is only because we can reason in this way that we can operate with rules at all. We could not abide by a set of rules or engage in rule governed activities unless we had a prior understanding of this principle. But while it is a necessary condition of other principles being described as moral ones, this does not mean the condition is in itself a moral one, rather it only becomes morally significant when what it is being applied to is, in the first instance, of moral value or importance.

Aspin says:

'the athlete gains his position of pre-eminence as a result of his own spirit of dedication and sacrifice and, crucially under a system of rules which rest upon the acceptance of human worth and dignity, on the concepts of fairness and equality' (52).

But I would say the system of rules only rests on the idea of making the activity possible. Rules do not exist to make possible or to regulate moral conduct but to define the game. To say of someone that he is playing a game is necessarily to say that he is abiding by the principle of fairness, but this is to say no more than that he is playing according to the rules, for adhering to the rules at least in part is just to understand and accept this principle.

It is interesting that Aspin himself admits that to be morally relevant an action will spring from a free choice on the part of their agent and will be based on his ability to give reasons for them that are 'relevant and appropriate, capable in principle at all events of being judged as such by people generally' (53). But actions within the game carried out because of what the rules dictate are not freely chosen. And this is why it is just inappropriate to see the rules of the game, and therefore the principles by which we are able to operate with them, as moral ones. For we recognise moral rules as such, not only because they belong to a particular moral system in which rational agents have a mutual interest, but where those who act according to the rules have some degree of choice. If we describe an action as moral it is not just because it is in accordance with a moral rule but because we believe the person should have acted otherwise. Where we understand moral autonomy as an important characteristic in the development of the person as a moral agent then we would expect him to act from moral rules only when they reflect higher order principles that he has freely accepted, and to be able to change the rules when they fail to do this. Moral rules, as J. Rawls has argued in his article 'Two Concepts of Rules' are therefore more like maxims or rules of thumb than rules that define a practice' (54).

Rawls, in this article, compares rules as guides where one has in principle full option to use the guides or to discard them as the situation warrants without one's moral office being altered in any way and rules which define



a practice. With rules of this second kind one holds an office defined by a practice then questions regarding one's actions in this office are settled by reference to the rules which define the practice and where the practice is logically prior to the forms of action it specifies (55). To engage in a practice is to perform those actions specified by a practice. It therefore does not make sense for a person to raise the question whether or not a rule of a practice correctly applies to his case as it would in the case of a moral rule. Rawls says:

'we would take it as some kind of joke if in a game of basketball a batter were to ask can I have four strikes. But was not asking for a specification of the rules but was wondering if on this occasion it would be best on the whole for him to have four strikes instead of three' (56).

In a moral situation to ask about the desirability of a rule is to expect an answer in terms of the well-being of the person or persons concerned or in terms of the common good. But in a game to ask about the desirability of a rule is to expect an answer in terms of how it might contribute to the technical goodness of the game, how, for example, it might be changed in order that it might produce a better game. It is knowing what the rules make possible that enables us to decide what kind of rules they are and whether or not they are moral rules.

There are some rules in a game however which are of a moral nature, this is because as well as determining the logical character of the game they safeguard the interests of the players as human beings capable, at least, of suffering physical pain. There are therefore many rules, particularly in dangerous sports (like combat sports) that ensure the safety of the lives of the players and as far as it is possible to do this, freedom from injury. In boxing and fencing, for example, the rules do not allow the players to fight to the death or that serious injury is inflicted (at least they try to prevent it happening). However, it is still conceivable, as it was at the time of ancient Rome, that a game could be devised where the rules allowed, indeed even necessitated, that this happened. In a human blood sport such as this, in spite of a total disregard for the most basic moral values of human life, it would be no less a game because of it. Another example which illustrates the same point is the one Peters gives, in 'Ethics and Education' during his analysis of justice, of the torturer who, in spite of his wicked

practices could be described as just in that he could exercise his art on his victims with fine distinction and impartiality (57). Cruel sports, unfortunately are still sports.

Usually, however, as I have said, rules that define a game or sport do not allow the practice of cruelty but this does not mean that what they do allow is a moral enterprise rather they make possible an activity that is morally neutral.

With regard to making any kind of justification because of the kinds of activities games and sports by their competitive and rule governed nature necessarily are, I think the most that can be said is that children will through playing games come to understand the principles of fairness which is also a necessary principle in moral reasoning. More specifically, one can say learning to adhere to a set of rules may be necessary before one can understand what it means to live according to moral rules. But this would be a very limited kind of justification indeed, because at best it could only be seen as a pre-condition before a particular stage of moral development could be reached (for example, Kohlberg's good boy stage (58)), but which in itself would be an aspect of a child's cognitive rather than moral development.

#### (b) Inter-Personal Agreement

It may be felt at this stage that I have not done full justice to Aspin's account in that I have ignored the fact that playing a game is not just a question of the players adhering to the rules, it also necessitates that there is inter-personal agreement to abide by them in the first place.

J.H. Green in his article 'Competitive Sport, Morality and Education' (59) suggests that agreeing to play the game according to the rules is analogous to making a promise, so that someone breaking the rules deliberately to secure an unfair advantage is like a person failing to keep his word. This is why it is always morally appropriate to condemn the cheat.

The function of the rules is, as I have argued, to define the activity, but this is not their only function, in sports and games they also ensure that both players or teams have an equal opportunity to win. If the rules are deliberately broken and where this remains undetected, not only can the activity be said to be no longer going on, but, also, that the condition of



equal opportunity is no longer being met. Now Green argues that if players set themselves above these rules and create an unfair situation so that their winning can be disputed they do not appreciate the full entailment of their moral decision to play the game. However, this does not lead him to believe, as it did Aspin, that games are moral enterprises, rather he says 'any connections which exist between competitive sport and morality are contingent not logical or conceptual ones' (60). Although he views the players' original decision to take part in a game as an analogue to making a promise he concludes that, 'once this promise is made no further moral issues ought, and this implies can, arise'. (61) For when a player cheats while he is held morally responsible for his actions, this is not in relation to what rule he has broken or, as Green says, 'in terms of the specific incidence, but in relation to the players' original moral decision to play the game' (62). We disapprove of the cheat because he puts the whole activity in jeopardy.

While I believe Aspin is wrong to say that games are necessarily moral enterprises, I believe that equally wrong are those who see games as somehow being immune from ethical considerations or moral judgments, whether regarding the conduct of the individual players or the game as a whole. Much of what Aspin says I could have accepted if he had not gone so far and had limited himself to making the point that playing a game is an inter-personal activity and therefore open to moral comment.

Certainly it is wrong to argue, as some have done, that because games are self-contained, separate from the serious business of living that we can behave just as we like on the games field because ethically it does not matter. Cheating in playing games is just as morally deplorable as cheating a friend out of some money or breaking someone's confidence. Playing games is just as much a part of life as any other inter-personal activity and we are therefore just as morally accountable on the playing field or athletic track as off them.

It is because of this that Green is quite right to say cheating in a game is comparable to breaking a promise, but he is also right, for the reasons I have already given, to say that any connection between sport and morality is only contingent. If Aspin's arguments that games are necessarily moral enterprises seem at all plausible it is only because he takes very broad criteria of what would enable an activity to be described as coming into



the moral category, so, in effect, all actions and activities (at least interpersonal ones) end up coming into it.

Now, it will be remembered from part one, chapter five, that one of the difficulties in examining the nature of morality is that it can be given so many different meanings (see pp 120-122). We only had to consider, for example, the difference between positive morality and individual morality (63) and the importance of both rational and social criteria in deciding what counts as moral action. Also with regard to moral agency it was found there was the problem that one can only say a person is necessarily a moral agent, in the very weak sense that as a rational agent and as a member of society, he will be held morally accountable for his behaviour, and there are as we saw, many other importantly different reasons why we should wish to describe persons as moral agents. For, in spite of the use of the one term 'moral agent' which might be used to describe all of the following, I argued that we still needed to distinguish between: 'the person who has through reflection arrived at his own moral principles which may go beyond what is socially required of him and the one who unthinkingly accepts the moral norms of his time; the man who acts 'morally' but always prudentially and the one who is motivated by selfless ideals; and between the person who always acts on his moral beliefs, without thinking too much about them and the one who never gets past the stage of deliberating' .(64)

Now it seems to me that Aspin fails to take these kinds of differences into account especially when looked at in relation to moral education. Where our interest is in what moral values we wish children to come to hold, where we are concerned whether they will have the strength of character to live by them and whether they will be motivated for reasons of altruism, self-interest or moral duty, then a broad definition of morality is no good to us.

In chapter eight, when considering what criteria would have to be fulfilled for a person's development to count as his development qua person it had to be accepted that it was impossible to say anything very helpful with regard to how a person might necessarily develop as a moral agent, in that to say a person will necessarily become morally accountable for what he does, tells us nothing about his moral development per se. Whether we like it or not to talk about moral education and more specifically aims of moral education, we have to enter the prescriptive stage where what we put forward will be highly contestable and this will inevitably be true of what I have to say next.



Now I would hold the view that in moral education we should give a lot of consideration to what motivates us in our conduct towards each other, the importance of which Aspin seems to neglect. To get children just to understand that life is 'beset with obligations of one sort and another', (65) even to get them in the position of being able to adapt, justify, analyse or apply principles 'in inter-personal affairs in the world, that they can seem to be universalizeable, overriding, other-regarding, significantly related to human welfare and harm' (66) does not do justice to their development as individuals who care for each other, it is too much like an intellectual exercise comprising largely of deliberate reflection on what they ought to do while fulfilling all these different criteria.

In reality we do not very often have to make difficult moral decisions that involve all this deliberation, and when we do have to, we do not always know which principle is the most important to us, so that when we have made a decision and acted upon it we may always wonder if we did the right thing. In any case most of the time we just act, because of the kind of people we have become, because of the way we feel towards each other and how we see the situation at that moment in time.

Of course the development of moral autonomy is important, it is obviously an ideal that can be justified as an aim of moral education, but the only or even the main ideal?

Suppose a child had progressed sufficiently in his moral thinking so he could be said to have reached Kohlberg's sixth and final stage of his moral development. (67), but suppose he was unable to relate to his fellow human beings and suppose he always behaved for reasons of prudence and never, for example, out of love, would this be enough? Would it be sufficient that he had become morally autonomous.

Imagine another child not very good at stating, let alone deliberating, what moral principles he should hold, but who invariably acted only out of kindness towards his fellow beings whose moral education was not so much the result of anything he had learnt formally at school (whether from the attitude of his teacher, the school acting as a community or discussion of the relevant moral issues of the day) but what he had learnt from the living example of his mother and his own natural inclination that other people matter.



Suppose we could get children to the stage of deliberating over their moral principles, but suppose, although these principles were other-regarding, they always acted out of self-interest because being rational they could see that living in a society was dependent on upholding a moral code or codes which they all adhered to for reasons of reciprocal advantage, would we believe they were now morally educated because they behaved correctly and could justify their behaviour rationally as autonomous agents? Would this even make any sense when we compared it against our experience of moral life which is intimately caught up with our feelings towards one another? Does it really not matter how we feel in our moral conduct as long as we do the right thing?

Mary Midgley in an article, 'The Objection to Systematic Humbug' (68) argues to my mind convincingly that it does matter (69). She says, 'if a rational creature has to be a social creature it also has to be a creature with affections to suppose otherwise is an illicit abstraction' (70). She says, 'to praise will without feelings makes little sense. Every thought about values has to have its passive contemplative element we cannot really think injustice is bad if it does not at some point sicken us' (71). But equally, she says, 'however highly we may value feeling we do not actually praise Feeling which is divorced from Will (72)'. Feeling is both active and deliberate, both are resolved in action. 'Thought, feeling and action are conceptionally not contingently connected, they are aspects of the one thing - conduct' (73). She emphasises the development of our attitudes through active thinking and imagining:

'Goodwill is not the power to do the right thing suddenly while still wallowing in habitual ill-will, envy, self-pity or the fear of life. It is the power to change such emotional habits over time through vigorous attending and imagining into better ones' (74).

Now my problem is that given these kinds of considerations are, as I see it, important to our understanding of what constitutes moral conduct, one of our main aims of moral education must be to foster the development of particular emotional attitudes, namely those characterised by 'caring' motives, for example, tolerance, benevolence, sympathy and compassion. But how can we possibly defend the view that playing games and enjoying sports can help develop these kinds of attitudes? Now, of course, it is possible that engaging in P.E. activities could help children to become generous and



tolerant even magnanimous, but to labour the point, this does not follow simply from playing games. For playing games does not necessitate what particular kind of motive a player should have. Even if a person behaves impeccably while playing a game, he would never, for example, dream of cheating, this need not be out of any respect or concern he has for his opponent or even because he does not like to go back on his original commitment to play the game (analagous to wanting to keep his promise) but because he can see keeping to the rules is necessary if the activity is to go on (to put it more strongly he can see that to keep the rules is to engage in the activity). He does not have to see his opponent as a person at all (once he is engaging in the activity) but simply as another player instrumental in enabling him to play. It is significant perhaps that moral judgments do not arise until someone intentionally breaks the rules while trying to remain undetected. We do not pass moral judgment where everyone is playing according to the rules, we do not say 'look at everyone behaving morally', which we should be able to do if games were necessarily moral enterprises. It is also significant that when it does become appropriate to pass judgment it is invariably passed not so much on what has actually happened (e.g. a deliberate infringement of a rule which may in itself be trivial) but on what this tells us about a player's character.

(c) A Justification Which Looks To Non-Intrinsic Reasons

If we have any hope of showing that physical education can contribute to a child's moral development we will have to look to a justification that is based on non-intrinsic reasons. This kind of justification acknowledges that games and sports as well as dance are not necessarily moral enterprises and that any moral lessons which may be learnt from engaging in them is a contingent not a necessary consequence of playing. It therefore has the advantage of being honest, of making certain claims without at the same time having to distort the nature of games in doing so. If we can accept these limitations I think some kind of case can be made.

The main reason why I think at least it is possible that physical education could have a part to play in contributing to a child's moral development is because during the P.E. lesson and in P.E. activities generally there is necessarily, unlike in many classroom lessons and activities, a considerable degree of interaction between children engaged in a shared enterprise.



In engaging in games, dance and gymnastics children could, for example, learn to become tolerant of one another, to be patient and to be co-operative. But these kinds of attitudes do not come, as I have just argued, as a logically necessary consequence of taking part in P.E. activities, neither do I think has it been shown empirically that these attitudes will just develop by dint of engaging, whether it be in sport or in any other aspect of physical education. I think what has to be accepted is that any moral education which comes about through physical education will only be the result of the deliberate efforts of the teacher. If the teacher is prepared to see his role as a moral educator, as well as a teacher of P.E., then, he could help to encourage attitudes of friendship and respect between members of the group and to discourage negative ones like meanness, hostility and spitefulness.

Clearly, the P.E. teacher's greatest opportunity would come in outdoor pursuits. In such activities as camping, orienteering, mountaineering, canoeing and sailing one is dependent, even in order to participate in them, on the co-operation of every member of the group, where, and this is the point that counts, one's life may depend upon it. In something like mountaineering without such qualities as perseverance, patience, courage, mutual understanding and tolerance the whole enterprise is doomed to failure and in all outdoor pursuits there is the need to share, to act jointly and to trust one another.

M.C. Meakin in an article, 'Physical Education: An Agency of Moral Education?' (75) also emphasises the potential moral significance of these kinds of activities. In camping, for example, he says:

'the conditions under which one is forced to live are relatively spartan and that one has to live in close proximity with one's fellows. The aim being group survival plus a tolerable quality of life, high levels of mutual co-operation, tolerance and self-control are demanded.' (76)

While a fairly strong case can be made for these activities where there is the potential problem if even minimally, of physical survival I think it has to be accepted that other aspects of physical education, particularly in games and sports, where there is not this element of life and death, the manner, approach and where necessary the intervention of the teacher, will be much more contrived, and unfortunately one has to say that, however committed



the teacher might be to his role as a moral educator, indeed even to the point where trying to foster attitudes which will lead to the development of children's moral character might actually be his main aim, he may well be disappointed. For he is much more unlikely to be successful now than he would have been in the days when qualities of sportsmanship were recognised and valued on a universal scale. Inevitably the replacement in many instances of amateur with professional sport has played its part in the gradual erosion of the old values associated with gamesmanship. Phrases like 'that's not cricket', 'be a sport', now seem to have little meaning in relation to their original context and at best sound rather quaint.

There is also the problem of transfer. If moral lessons are learnt, for example, through dancing with other people, can these lessons be applied elsewhere? If moral qualities are observed in a games player are they also to be found in his behaviour when he is not playing? D. Meakin in the article already referred to raises the same problem. He says that:

'even if it might be granted that pupils would develop moral qualities in different aspects of physical education it will still be doubted whether these qualities will be transferred to other areas of a pupil's life'. (76)

However in spite of this doubt he still believes there can be transfer in that the principles of action they learn in P.E. activities will be relevantly similar in other situations (77).

Personally I do not think that this kind of claim amounts to very much, largely for the reasons Meakin himself raises, that what is of most interest to us is whether motivation is likely to be transferred (although this seems an odd way of putting it). Meakin tries to argue that because there are numerous similarities as well as differences in sport and other activities in life then 'if a pupil can be motivated to behave in morally praiseworthy ways in certain situations arising in competitive sport and the rest there would appear to be no reason in principle why he cannot be motivated to behave in these ways in a relevantly similar situation in other activities too' (78). But I do not find his argument convincing.

However, what I would endorse is that, firstly, if moral qualities are to be found in P.E. activities, like sport, dance and outdoor pursuits, as a result of engaging in them (which in the latter, as I have argued, is very likely

to be the case), then this is of positive educational value because these activities do, in themselves, constitute a part of life. But secondly, that any transfer is not going to be automatic, and that generally speaking where we do think it is possible that moral development can occur through engagement in physical education, particularly in outdoor pursuits, we have to accept this will largely be the result of the deliberate and conscious efforts of the teacher.

## v CONCLUSION

In part one I suggested that the concept of education, if it is to be of any use to philosophers, has to be seen as an essentially contestable concept, where there is only at a very basic level unanimous agreement on what the preconditions of education must be, namely that it is about learning within a social context, learning which presupposes the agency of the person and which has a transforming effect- in that it changes the person qua person by the difference it makes to him in terms of what he comes to know, his conceptual awareness, the evaluations he makes and the attitudes he holds. It is from this level of agreement that definitions of education can be constructed at a higher level which are logically based on these preconditions but which will nevertheless be contestable and will conflict with one another. Furthermore their validity at this level depends on those who put them forward being able to defend them by showing their advantages over other definitions, for example, how well they realize those values presupposed in the preconditions and how strongly grounded they are in those preconditions (used to replace Gallie's example) about which we must necessarily agree.

I have argued that education is best understood as: 'learning which promotes the development of the person qua person', for the reason that this does justice to the fact that education presupposes learning, the agency of the person and the fact that what he learns actually changes him; and I have defended this definition against other definitions, for example, that education is only concerned with the development of knowledge and understanding, or on just becoming a person and the development of autonomy. It is on the basis of the definition I have given and defended in parts one and two that I have been able in part three to justify physical education.



I would suggest the reason why justifications of physical education have failed in the past was for two main reasons. Firstly, we have lacked a theory of physical education which meant our subject area had no principle of unity, no underlying rationale, this has not only meant physical education could not easily be defined (which as we have seen has even led some to suggest we should dispense with the term altogether and write our obituary (see p.191) but also that where there have been disputes arising from competing claims over what physical education is essentially about, there has been no way of resolving them. Secondly, the definitions of education from which philosophers worked, in effect made it logically impossible to justify physical education. For example, if one understands education to be the development only of knowledge and understanding, it is hard to justify the educational value of those activities where the main values are to do with the realization of physical skill and aesthetic quality in human movement and where cognitive values are at best secondary.

But by taking a formalist theory usually to be found only in the philosophy of art and aesthetics and by applying it to P.E. activities, physical education can be seen to have a coherent rationale and recognisable 'K' values which are unique and apply universally; and by defining education as 'learning which promotes the development of the person qua person', it is possible to justify physical education because of the considerable contribution it makes to the development of the person.

Firstly, as a centre of experience by learning to engage in P.E. activities the person will find satisfaction of a non-detachable kind:

- (a) Generally, there will be the interplay of different powers (for example, fitness, physical skill, strength and endurance, creativity, imagination, practical judgment, courage) and the harmony that comes from the release of these powers working together. Physical education can therefore provide for many what they may well want to describe as spiritual renewal as well as personal fulfilment.
- (b) More specifically, there is the intrinsic satisfaction which comes from moving skilfully. This after all is the point of sporting activities existing. They are contrived to bring about an artificial end because realizing this end demands physical skill which is intrinsically valued.



- (c) Also, and again quite specifically, there is aesthetic satisfaction to be found, particularly in dance but also to some extent in those sports like gymnastics which are defined, at least in part, by aesthetic criteria. Learning to engage in dance and these kinds of sports necessitate the understanding of aesthetic rules and principles and the appreciation of the aesthetic quality of movements which are defined, if only partially, by aesthetic criteria. There is also, and this is more important because it is unique to engaging in certain P.E. activities, the experience of gaining aesthetic satisfaction in a way only available to the performer, that is through his kinaesthetic sense.

Critiques given on physical education must, I would suggest, to be valid come from the inside, and not, as so often happens, from the point of view of a critical spectator. For however considerable the spectator's knowledge of particular P.E. activities might be and however much he enjoys and appreciates watching them being performed, it is only the participant who can, for example, by struggling to make his limbs go in unaccustomed ways, by continually repeating movements until they become second nature; by undertaking tests of endurance and physical strength, by becoming sensitive to the movements of others; by learning the fit between what the movement looks like to perform and what counts as successful technique or aesthetic excellence, come to appreciate those values that are discovered only through finally gaining mastery and the experience and sense of freedom this brings.

Then, incidentally, there will be other kinds of satisfaction. For example for a few there will be the satisfaction to be gained from proving oneself to be good in a way that could get world-wide recognition, and for all of us there will often be the opportunity to enjoy visually the aesthetic form of other participants' movements, to appreciate natural beauty and to experience the feeling of physical well-being that comes from the purposeful exercising of the human body.

Secondly, as a rational agent it can be said that physical education can contribute to the development of the person qua person because being initiated into a particular group of intrinsically worthwhile activities increases the range of alternatives open to him that he might want to choose for their own sake. If he does, learning to engage in them may have provided him with life-long interests. In a society in which unemployment is commonplace



and which advances in modern technology is likely to continue to be so and where also a great amount of leisure time is available to many of us, it would not be too far to say that for some engagement in physical activities will help them to find life worth living.

Thirdly, as a moral agent it can be said that, incidentally and to a limited extent, physical education may make a positive contribution to a person's development, especially in outdoor pursuits. But it has to be emphasised that if engagement in P.E. activities does contribute to the development of the person as a moral agent this is not a necessary consequence of engaging in P.E. activities (for they are not, as Aspin argued in some sense essentially moral enterprises). rather it is dependent on whether the teacher is prepared to take advantage of interactive and co-operative situations most P.E. activities involve in order to get over moral lessons to his pupils.

Fourthly, and also incidentally, it can be said that because engagement in many P.E. activities is likely to enable a person to reach a level of physical fitness (which can be measured in physiological terms) this will enable him to cope with the stresses and strains of everyday living and to help him remain active throughout his life. It will therefore help in an indirect way towards the development of the person qua person and the subsequent quality of his life.

However, in the end we must all acknowledge that it is only because there are values in physical education which are not to be found anywhere else, namely unique 'K' qualities and the appreciation of which requires initiation into different participatory activities, that the educational value of P.E. activities can be most strongly justified and subsequently the place of physical education on the school curriculum. For example some may want to talk of physical education as one kind of a unique form of experience, others may see the necessity of having physical education on the curriculum, if education is to be of the 'whole man'. There is no need to look further; although physical education may contribute to developing a child's capacity for rational thinking, his moral behaviour and attitudes; and while there may be the opportunity for the appreciation of natural beauty and the aesthetic aspects of a particular game like football, not actually defined by aesthetic criteria, these are incidental 'spin-offs' and should never detract from those unique 'K' qualities which, unlike these other values, can only



be discovered by actually engaging in physical education. And we do a disservice to what as practitioners (i.e. as sportsmen and women, athletes and dancers) we value most if we forget this.

Finally, something needs to be said about a certain dimension that P.E. activities have, which other activities, although they may be physical and carried out for the kinds of non-extrinsic reasons described above, are not.

In a sedentary society like our own we cannot usually look to everyday action to find examples of physical prowess or aesthetic forms of physical expression. Activities have to be contrived for this purpose (although, of course, they always were when living was more primitive, and survival demanded physical action; this was no more true than it was at the time of Ancient Greece). Without sport and dance there would be the risk that we could forget, at least in movement terms, the physical aspect of our being. We desire in western society to make ourselves comfortable, to kill pain, to move as little as possible. But whatever our capacity for thought we are subject to the same natural laws as any other species. In the end it is our physical condition that has the last word but at least while it allows us we have the chance to let our bodies speak!

One can, when they are done well, see activities like cricket, basketball, fencing, ice skating, Russian dancing, marathon running, ski jumping as forms of human greatness or excellence, worthy of universal acclaims, even, as in the case of the round-the-world yachtsmen, moral acclaim. This says something about the nature or 'mentality' of these activities that they are up to this, that they can inspire us to think in this way. It would not be true of all physical activities even if they were carried out for intrinsic reasons and carried out well. One could never have the same sorts of feelings towards someone who could spit a long way, knit quickly or spin a plate for hours on end; and there are some activities like those in 'It's A Knockout' which are designed to be funny, rather than to exhibit skill (although they do), to be laughed at rather than to be applauded (although they are). P.E. activities have a certain dimension that makes it possible for us to talk in terms of human achievement and makes them worthy of learning, dedication, in short of being called physical education.

What I am suggesting, then, is that the full nature of sport and dance can only be understood against a certain background. This background is one



where we see man as a physical being with severe limitations, for example, of being subject to the laws of nature, of being physically vulnerable, of ultimately being finite, it is against this conception of man that we see his attempts to overcome these limitations as heroic. We recognise a certain magnificence in the movements of the great athletes or dancers because they give us a glimpse of what we might have been, had we been more god-like and had not the awkwardness of our human frame.

Now it does not matter that it is only a minority that gives us this ideal; we should not, as some have done, devalue the potential of P.E. activities because the vast majority are not able to realize it (indeed by comparison do rather badly). It is not as if the existence of these persons, past or present, who have given us this ideal, prevent others from aspiring towards it by performing as well as they are able to.

For it is only through engaging in physical education that we can become fully aware of unique 'K' qualities which we are able to appreciate disinterestedly; and it is only through the release and interplay of many different powers, including the power of our imagination, that we can experience spiritual renewal, a special kind of freedom in the rhythm and harmony of our total physical and personal being.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 See R. Dearden, The Philosophy of Primary Education, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968) Chapter five 'Play As An Educational Process', p.100.
- 2 M. Fisher, 'Sport As An Aesthetic Experience', in Sport and The Body, ed. E. Gerber. (Lea and Febiger, 1974).
- 3 See for example J. White, Towards A Compulsory Curriculum, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973) p.40.
- 4 For a synopsis of the findings of recent research see Bassey and P.H. Fenten, Exercise: The Facts. (Oxford University Press, 1981).

- 5 In the first instance the initial claim may be straightforwardly scientific in that it simply states that exercise has certain physiological effects on the body, for example, that it maintains and promotes the functioning of the cardio-muscular system in good working order. This may then be illustrated by the gradual effect of regular anaerobic exercise (such as jogging, walking or cycling) on a previously sedentary individual where there is a continual improvement in the muscle oxygen transport system and in the use of the cardio-vascular system. This effect can be interpreted in terms of fitness which if necessary can be scientifically measured. See, for example, B.J. Sharkey, Physiology of Fitness Human Kinetics, (Champaign 1979).
- 6 H.B. Falls, 'Modern Concepts of Physical Fitness', in Journal of Physical Education and Recreation (April 1980).
- 7 Ibid., p.25.
- 8 Ibid., p.25.
- 9 There has been many studies on this. The best known are the ones carried out in the fifties on London Transport workers (see J. Morris and P Raffle 'Coronary Heart Disease in Transport Workers', in British Journal of Industrial Medicine 1954, pp.260-272 and the one conducted more recently over a period of twenty two years on San Franciscan longshoremen. During this time it was found that with those men who were regularly engaged in a high level of physical work there was a death rate from CHD which was almost half that found in men performing work requiring medium or low level exertion. (See R.S. Paffenberger, W.E. Hale 1975, Work Activity and Coronary Heart Mortality New England J. Med 292 54S-SSO).
- 10 See for example, E.J. Bassey and P.H. Fenten, op. cit., p.48.
- 11 D. Carr, 'Aims of Physical Education' in Physical Education Review, Vol. 2 No.3 (1979).
- 12 Ibid., p.96.
- 13 Ibid., p.97.



- 14 Ibid., p.97.
- 15 See his article 'Practical Pursuits and the Curriculum', Journal of Philosophy of Education, Vol. 12 (1978), p.70.
- 16 G. Ryle, The Concept of Mind, (Penguin University Press, re-issued 1973), Chapter II.
- 17 Ibid., p.41.
- 18 D.C. Brown, 'Knowing How and Knowing What, That' in, Wood and Pilcher (eds.) Ryle, (Macmillan and Company, 1970).
- 19 Ibid., pp.224-238.
- 20 A.D. Munrow, Physical Education: A Discussion of Principles, (London, G. Bell & Sons, 1972) pp.107-108.
- 21 I owe the formulation and appreciation of the importance of this distinction to Joan Cooper, University of London, Institute of Education.
- 22 For a discussion on this point see N. Brett, 'Knowing How, What, That' and D.J. Brown 'Reply to Brett', both in Canadian Journal of Philosophy. Vol. IV No.2 (Dec. 1974) pp.297-298.
- 23 I. Scheffler, Conditions of Knowledge: An Introduction to Epistemology and Education, The University of Chicago Press 1965) p.93.
- 24 See Chapter 2 p.38.
- 25 See D. Carr, 'The Logic of Knowing How and Ability', in Mind, 88 No.351 (1974).
- 26 See D. Carr, 'On Mastering A Skill', in The Journal of Philosophy of Education, Vol. 15 No.1 (1981) pp.92-93.
- 27 Ibid., p.94.
- 28 See D. Carr, 'Aims of Physical Education', op. cit., p.99.

- 29 In Aims of Physical Education he starts off just by using the word Skill without qualifying it, e.g. most physical educationalists, who see themselves ..... as teachers of practical knowledge and skill (p.11). Then later he says physical activities provide an opportunity to acquire and exercise cognitive skills coming to know how to do things (p.92) but he also says, 'Mastery of Skills and forms of practical knowledge then is clearly essential if a person is to be called physically educated (p.99) and then, 'instruction in physical skills is not the aim of physical education - it is physical education'.
- 30 See C. Taylor 'What is Human Agency?' in The Self, ed. T. Mischel (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1977).
- 31 For the full exposition that was given to this distinction see part one, pp.107-109.
- 32 J. White, Towards A Compulsory Curriculum, op. cit..
- 33 Ibid., p.22.
- 34 Ibid., p.22.
- 35 Ibid., p.26.
- 36 Ibid., p.27.
- 37 Ibid., p.27.
- 38 Ibid., p.33.
- 39 See part one, chapter eight, pp.183-184.
- 40 D. Aspin, 'Ethical Aspects of Sport and Games and Physical Education', in Proceedings of The Philosophy of Education Society of G.B. Vol. 9 (1975).
- 41 Ibid., p.49.
- 42 Ibid., pp.49-50.



- 43 Ibid., p.61.
- 44 A. Natan, 'Sport and Politics', in Sport, Culture and Society, eds. J.W. Loy and G.S. Kenyon (Collier Macmillan Co. Ltd. 1969).
- 45 D. Aspin, op. cit., p.62.
- 46 Ibid., p.62.
- 47 Ibid., p.62.
- 48 See p.221.
- 49 D. Aspin, op. cit., p.55.
- 50 Ibid., p.61.
- 51 R.S. Peters, Ethics and Education, (George Allen and Unwin Ltd.) 1966. p.134.
- 52 Op. cit., p.54.
- 53 Ibid., p.58.
- 54 J. Rawls, 'Two Concepts of Rules', in Philosophical Review, 64 (January 1965), 3-32.
- 55 Ibid., pp.26-27.
- 56 Ibid., p.27.
- 57 R.S. Peters, op. cit., p.124.
- 58 L. Kohlberg, 'Stage and Sequence', in Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research, ed. D.A. Goslin (Rand McNally), (Chicago, 1969).
- 59 J.H. Green, 'Competitive Sport, Morality and Education', in Research Papers in Physical Education, (1977) 3(3) : 24-26.

- 60 Ibid., p.25.
- 61 Ibid., p.25.
- 62 Ibid., p.25.
- 63 See N. Cooper, 'Two Concepts of Morality', in The Definition of Morality, ed. G. Wallace and A.D.M. Walker, (Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1970) pp.34-61.
- 64 See p.33.
- 65 D. Aspin, op. cit., p.5.
- 66 Ibid., p.58.
- 67 See L. Kohlberg, from 'Is to Ought', in Cognitive Development and Epistemology, ed. T. Mischel (Academic Press, 1971) pp.204-212.
- 68 M. Midgley, 'The Objection to Systematic Humbug', in Philosophy, April (1978).
- 69 She also believes that Kant thought so as well and those who have attributed to him the opposite view have misunderstood him. See pp.158-166 of her article.
- 70 Ibid., p.161.
- 71 Ibid., p.159.
- 72 Ibid., p.162.
- 73 Ibid., p.169.
- 74 Ibid., p.167.
- 75 D.C. Meakin, 'Physical Education: An Agency of Moral Education', in Journal of Philosophy of Education, Vol. 15 No.2 (1981).



76 Ibid., p.251.

77 Ibid., p.252.

78 Ibid., pp.252-253.

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